

Spring 2017

## *Honors in Practice*, Volume 13, 2017 (Complete issue)

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# HIP

## Honors In Practice

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

Volume 13 | 2017



# Honors in Practice

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## A PUBLICATION OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

JOURNAL EDITOR

Ada Long

University of Alabama at Birmingham

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ISBN: 978-0-9911351-4-1

ISSN 1559-0151

## INDEXING STATEMENT

*HIP* is indexed full-text in the EBSCO, ERIC, and Gale library databases and is archived in the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Digital Commons repository.

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Cover photo by Jensen Sutta

## EDITORIAL POLICY

*Honors in Practice (HIP)* publishes articles about innovative practices in individual honors programs and nuts-and-bolts issues of concern to the members of the National Collegiate Honors Council. *HIP* employs a double-blind peer review system. Essays should present ideas and/or practices that will be useful to other honors administrators and faculty, not just descriptions of “what we do at our institution.” Essays should advance a thesis located within a larger context such as theoretical perspectives, trends in higher education, or historical background. Essays should also demonstrate an awareness of previous honors discussions of the topic.

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at <[adalong@uab.edu](mailto:adalong@uab.edu)>.

## DEADLINE

*HIP* is published annually. The deadline for submissions is January 1.

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. We accept material by email attachment in Word (not pdf). We do not accept material by fax or hard copy.
2. If documentation is used, the documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is strongly preferred, and the editor will revise all internal citations in accordance with MLA guidelines.
3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.
4. Accepted essays are edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.





## DEDICATION



**James Sherman Ruebel**  
**1945–2016**

On October 9, 2016, we lost a longtime NCHC member and important contributor to honors education in the United States and beyond. Jim Ruebel was President of NCHC in 2014 and served admirably throughout his four years as an officer in the organization from 2012 to 2015. He also served the NCHC on a variety of projects and committees that included the Honors Semesters Committee, through which he co-directed a Faculty Institute in Rome in 2005.

Before launching his distinguished career in honors, Jim had already established himself as a scholar in the Classics. He earned his bachelor's degree at Yale University and completed his master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Cincinnati in Classics and Ancient History. He was the author of *Apuleius: The Metamorphoses, Book 1* (Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2000) and *Caesar and the Crisis of the Roman Aristocracy* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1994). He received an American Philological Association Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Classics in 1994 and was President of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South in 2002.

Jim started his teaching career at the University of Minnesota and in 1978 joined the Iowa State University faculty, where he became Professor of Classics and Chair of the Modern & Classical Languages Department. As both a teacher and administrator, Jim's first commitment was always to his students. He held students to high standards and challenged them to meet those standards in ways that assured their success, so honors was a natural fit for him starting at Iowa State. In 2000, he assumed the positions of Dean of the Honors College and Professor of Classical Studies at Ball State University, positions he held with distinction for the rest of his life.

Jim's presidential address at the 2014 NCHC conference in Denver took as its theme Ovid's aphorism "tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis," the last part of which he translated in his title as "and we are a-changing, too" (later published in *HIP* 11: 41–49). Documenting some dramatic changes that NCHC was undergoing at the time, Jim remarked that the organization stood "as a rudder for honors education and for education in general." Jim stood at that rudder when the seas were rough, and he held a steady course. He has left an indelible imprint on the NCHC, on honors, and on his thousands of grateful students and colleagues.

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Ada Long

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The opening essay of this volume—"What Do We Belong to If We Belong to NCHC?"—manages to corral the spirit of the National Collegiate Honors Council without reducing it to a simple formula that would break it. In this slightly revised version of his 2016 presidential address at the Seattle conference in October, Jerry Herron of Wayne State University acknowledges the complex commitments and multiple roles that members bring to the conference as well as the rich variety of services they provide to each other within just a few days. He then takes his audience to "the quiet at the center of all that rackety good stuff." What he finds there is "a sense of belonging—belonging to each other and to an idea—that makes this outfit of ours truly wonderful and unique." Longtimers in the NCHC will know exactly what Herron is talking about; newcomers surely left the conference with a feel for it; and both groups will recognize the singularity of this feeling among the wide array of their other professional organizations: the feeling of "belonging to something that calls us out of ourselves."

Having relished this sense of belonging, readers can then get down to work and consider a policy matter important to all NCHC-member institutions. Philip L. Frana of James Madison University and Stacy Rice of Northern Virginia Community College make a compelling appeal for all two-year and four-year institutions to develop sound and detailed articulation agreements, which they prefer to call *memoranda of understanding*. In "Best Practices in Two-Year to Four-Year Honors Transfers," they provide a rationale and roadmap for developing such agreements, using their own experience and the experiences of other colleges and universities to describe what they consider best practices. A well-constructed honors document includes specific requirements for eligibility, policies for implementation, and descriptions of benefits, for each of which the authors provide their recommended guidelines. As they point out, the increasing numbers of two-year colleges in recent years as well as the encroachment of for-profit companies into the articulation arena call for new efforts to create sound and transparent procedures for transfer, which can both enhance the quality of education for honors students and ensure the integrity of honors at both two- and four-year institutions.

Readers needing to find new ways to expand their honors curriculum at a time when budgets are tight and administrations are reluctant to add costs

might want to consider the strategy that Kathy A. Lyon adopted at Winthrop University. In “Leveraging a Modest Success for Curriculum Development,” Lyon describes how she parlayed a low-cost, one-hour seminar program into an ambitious set of three-credit-hour, interdisciplinary honors courses. Lyon describes the importance of laying the groundwork for such a gambit by fostering positive relationships with higher administrators and by listening carefully to all the comments, even the most off-handed, made by teachers in the honors program. With these two commonsense practices in place, and then with a stroke of good luck, Lyon was able to turn a modest curriculum into an ambitious one that has pleased all the stakeholders in honors education at her institution.

Each of the next four essays provides an innovative idea for an honors course on a single campus that that might be replicated at other institutions. In “Encouraging Self-Reflection by Business Honors Students: Reflective Writing, Films, and Self-Assessments,” Stephen A. Yoder describes an act of serendipity akin to Kathy Lyon’s: in his case, a rereading of *The Moral Imagination*, edited by Oliver F. Williams. The book’s subtitle—*How Literature and Films Can Stimulate Ethical Reflection in the Business World*—suggested the idea for an honors course based on the book’s nine central themes, a course that Yoder then developed in the business school of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Yoder describes the eleven films he selected, the way he approached their themes in the context of business ethics, and the multiple strategies he used to elicit in his students the emotional intelligence and self-reflection that are key to leadership in business and wisdom in life.

In “Interdisciplinary Teaching of Theatre and Human Rights in Honors,” Maria Szasz describes the rationale, background, and teaching methods of a course she designed and taught at the University of New Mexico, a course that focused on treatment of human rights themes in fourteen twentieth-century plays. She explains the importance of teaching human rights topics to honors students and the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to both human rights and theater before illustrating the class’s approach in studying Athol Fugard’s *Master Harold* . . . *and the Boys*. The approach includes performance analysis and also history, biography, and autobiography in exploring, for instance, “why the South African government banned the play in both written and performance form.” Among the many benefits of the course, Szasz stresses the value for honors students of developing a deeper understanding of human rights issues, like apartheid, by feeling emotionally connected to them.

Emotional connection is also a key element in the course that Nadine Dolby of Purdue University describes in “Critical Experiential Education in the Honors Classroom: Animals, Society, and Education.” Drawing on the pedagogical philosophy of experiential learning, Dolby assigned day-long interaction with a single animal and reflective assignments as primary strategies—along with visits to farmers’ markets, role-playing activities, and other hands-on activities—to create an intensive, emotionally compelling, and life-changing dimension in an honors seminar that at the same time used the more traditional modes of critical analysis and scholarly research. In this “context of critical experiential education,” Dolby writes, “my class prompted students to apply what they had learned to creating changes in the way that humans interact with animals.” Students also made connections between the treatment of animals and the way humans treat each other, ultimately seeing the need to make the world “a more humane and just place.”

Justice and decency are also themes of “Got Privilege? An Honors Capstone Activity on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” by Patrick Bahls and Reid Chapman of the University of North Carolina Asheville. The essay describes a project that Bahls has incorporated in his honors section of the course Cultivating Global Citizenship, in which he has the students design and deliver a workshop on diversity, equity, and inclusion for faculty, community partners, and each other. Students work in teams throughout the semester leading up to the culminating event, which depends on the talents and interests of the students and which might include role-playing, videos, poster sessions, privilege walks, and “safe spaces.” Among the many benefits of this workshop is that it acknowledges “the students’ agency, asking them to position themselves as leaders and experts in their respective disciplines rather than passive objects on which social forces act,” and it offers “an opportunity for them to practice authentically engaged citizenship.”

In “Academic Socialization: Mentoring New Honors Students in Metadiscourse,” Gabriella Bedetti of Eastern Kentucky University describes the results of her research study—focused on three consecutive iterations of her course Succeeding in Honors from 2014 to 2016—of techniques for helping students hone their thinking and speaking skills through metadiscourse, “defined as talk about the ongoing talk.” In addition to describing these techniques, Bedetti illustrates what works—and what works better—through longitudinal comparison of the evolving course curriculum. Based on her research, Bedetti concludes, “In an expert discussion, metadiscourse helps speakers decenter their perception long enough to make a connection

with others. Metadiscourse helps the speaker focus. It also encourages the speaker—rather than the teacher—to restate and contextualize ideas.” The long-term benefit of learning these rhetorical skills is that “students gain independence, develop leadership, and enact cognitive responsibility.”

The final essay in this volume is “Honors Students’ Perceptions of Language Requirement as Part of a Global Literacy Competency.” Katelynn Malecha and Anne Dahlman begin by describing the competency-based honors program at Minnesota State University and then the competency of global literacy before zeroing in on the topic of the language requirement. The language requirement is part of the larger global literacy requirement designed to assure “ability to lead and serve in a multicultural world through increased self-awareness of one’s own culture and its relationship to others [and] deepened understanding of other cultural perspectives.” The authors designed a research study to find out if students perceived that, rather than just studying a foreign language, they were learning about “culture, prejudice, membership, cultural interactions, perspectives, and non-verbal and verbal communication.” While the results showed that students unanimously agreed with the goals of the competency and for the most part acknowledged the value of learning a second language, they did not always feel that the value of a second language compensated for the challenge of learning it. Given the rarity of language requirements in higher education these days, the results seemed encouraging, at least to this editor.

# Honors in Practice

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**2016 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**





# What Do We Belong to If We Belong to NCHC?

JERRY HERRON

Wayne State University

*(What follows is a slightly revised version of the 2016 presidential address delivered at the annual NCHC conference in Seattle, Washington.)*

I'd like to start with a question—one that seems appropriate, given the occasion and given the great conference that we have just been participating in. As president, looking back over the past few days and surveying the organization to which we all so proudly and so variously belong, I want to pose the following question: What do we belong to if we belong to NCHC?

Before getting to the answer, I want to tell you about a student who was a member of the first class I ever taught. She was present three times during that fledgling semester of mine: she was there on the first day and then again along toward the middle of the term, and she came on the last day, when we were to complete the anonymous student evaluation. Here's what she wrote on her evaluation, and it was all she wrote. I know she was the one doing the writing because she scrawled her name—first and last—diagonally across the evaluation sheet with a huge red Crayola just so I would be sure to know who was saying the following about me: “Not only did Mr. Herron not teach me anything this semester; he made me forget important stuff I already knew.”

I have been meditating on that student's comment for quite a few years now. At first, I was a little hurt by the implication that I had such a calamitous effect on tender young minds. But then I began to see things differently. That idle crack about making her forget stuff has become a kind of talisman to me, reminding me always to begin any pedagogical enterprise—such as a presidential address—with a little creative forgetting. So, I urge you to forget what you think you already know about the answer to the question of what we belong to if we belong to NCHC and instead to indulge along with me in some forgetfulness—forgetting the kind of school you come from, whether a large research university or a small faith-based institution, a traditional liberal arts school or a two-year college, or any one of the other types that make up NCHC. And I urge you to forget as well—for the time being—all the good ideas you have garnered here these past few days, talking together, hatching plots, developing strategies for getting what you need when you get back home, and how conspiratorially good it feels to conspire with others who confront the same kinds of challenges you face. I urge you to forget all the good work we do, that you and your students have been showcasing in the panels and papers and posters you have presented, and to forget how the honors gang were making those now so-called “best practices” a reality long before we even thought of them as best practices; you know what I mean: undergraduate research, capstone courses, learning communities, experiential learning, collaborative projects. We didn't do any of that good work because we wanted to brag about how many of the best-practices boxes we could check off; we just did what we knew was best. So forget about that stuff (for the moment). And I urge you to forget as well about your dinner plans tonight and the flight back home and who you might share a ride with to the airport.

You may, by now, have caught on to what I am urging here; it's a kind of mindfulness: being mindful of what's left when all the daily traffic of consciousness dies down. And no, I didn't come up with this idea at morning yoga; as for me, I slept in. I'll give credit where credit is due, which is why I brought up that long-ago student of mine—because I owe it all to her when it comes to the lesson of creative forgetting—forgetting so that we can see what is really before us.

Back to my question, then, about what it is we belong to if we belong to NCHC. In the name of creative forgetting, it's not the myriad practical and political and even poetic things that define honors education—all the busyness that necessarily has to go on at all the different kinds of places where we work and where our students go to school. It's the quiet at the center of all that

rackety good stuff. And what I find there is a sense of belonging—belonging to each other and to an idea—that makes this outfit of ours truly wonderful and unique. There are lots of other professional organizations, and I’m sure you all here are members of a number of them. But I would challenge you to ask if you feel you belong to those organizations the way we belong to NCHC.

The difference, I think, is the presence of an idea—an idea larger than any one of us, or of our institutions, an idea that can become as particular as a lesson plan or homework assignment, or as grand as the swelling in your breast when you sit there at commencement and watch a group of young (or perhaps not still young) scholars receive their diplomas. It’s an idea—a calling, really—that calls out lifelong commitments to quality of the kind you see recollected in the awards we present each year—the Founders Award, the awards that bear the names of people who embody the calling I’m talking about, the Brandolini and Schuman and Hanigan awards. It’s this calling we have set out to share strategically in the three initiatives that guide our organization: advocacy, research, and professional development. But calling to an idea of quality is more than a strategic plan, which is my point. The calling that summons us all together is best understood when it gets shared, through service to each other, and here I can point to no finer example than Hallie Savage, who has served honors so ably and well, for many years, and who will be stepping down next month from her position as executive director.

And I would point as well to Jim Ruebel, former president of NCHC, a good friend and wise colleague whose steady judgment and warm presence we will surely miss, as we will miss Dail Mullins, whose loss everyone who knew him will be feeling for a long time to come. I’m put in mind of what Dail said in a lead essay for *JNCHC* a few years back that meditated upon a question like the one I’m entertaining here—“What is Honors?” Being a good researcher, Dail investigated a number of honors program websites only to find that there was a lot of repetition of the same highfalutin phrases, which led him to the playful conclusion that all those statements might have been produced by an automated Honors Program Description Generator, which just goes to show how hard it is to put a name to the idea of quality I’m talking about.

So when it comes to the idea that calls us all here, I’m going to take a hint from Dail—and from that long-ago student of mine—and forget about trying to put into words what it is I’m talking about and go back instead to the notion of belonging to something that calls us out of ourselves. That is what NCHC means to me—not what we represent, but what we all are, here present with each other—on behalf of something that the Honors Program

Description Generator will never catch up to. There is no better work than this, I'm convinced—being led by the virtues we summon up in each other when we're called together by this great idea. So I want to thank you all for the opportunity afforded me, as president of NCHC, to forget all about what I won't be putting into words and instead to give myself up—virtuously—to being led by things better than I can say. I thank you.

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# Honors in Practice

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**PRACTICAL IDEAS  
ABOUT HONORS**



# Best Practices in Two-Year to Four-Year Honors Transfers

PHILIP L. FRANA

James Madison University

STACY RICE

Northern Virginia Community College

## INTRODUCTION

James Madison University (JMU) and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) teamed up in April 2014 to build a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between their respective four-year and two-year honors programs. This MOU is the basis for the continued work between these two institutions to collaborate and find research to assist other interested honors deans, directors, and coordinators in creating similar MOUs and demonstrating the importance of such agreements in higher education.

The information we want to share with others is a framework for the basic features of successful honors transfer agreements or memoranda of understanding. We enumerate a number of specific advantages to two-year and four-year institutions, and it explores a number of discursive patterns and

institutional challenges that appear across the spectrum in the formation of honors transfer agreements. This movement toward honors transfer partnerships is essential to the education of the nation's top students.

Two-year to four-year honors transfer agreements are enshrined in the National Collegiate Honors Council's (NCHC) Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program: "When appropriate, two-year and four-year programs [should] have *articulation agreements* by which honors graduates from two-year programs who meet previously agreed-upon requirements are accepted into four-year honors programs" (National Collegiate Honors Council, Basic). In both the NCHC 2014 Survey of Two-Year Institutions and the NCHC 2014–2015 Admissions, Retention, and Completion (ARC) Survey almost identical proportions of reporting two-year institutions said they already had "honors-to-honors" agreements (58.1% for the survey of two-year institutions and 60.0% in the ARC survey). In the ARC survey, institutional respondents at four-year institutions also received a question regarding articulation agreements: 30.7% of the NCHC four-year, degree-granting institutions had honors-to-honors agreements with at least one two-year institution (Cognard-Black).

Nevertheless, few students currently transfer between NCHC-member honors programs. The top three reasons students fail to transfer from two-year to four-year honors programs are (1) *pro forma* transfer agreements and transient professional relationships between program directors, (2) insufficient or opaque marketing and publicity, and (3) nonalignment between programs and/or difficulty in transferring community college honors credits, especially from state to state. We conclude that many community college students are unable to complete a four-year honors program upon transferring because the four-year transfer colleges have not yet taken the necessary steps to establish transfer agreements—functional documents and ancillary materials and activities that effectively facilitate transfers of honors students—and not because of inferior academic preparation on the part of the honors students.

## HONORS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The problem of high-achieving honors transfer students demands the immediate attention of both two-year and four-year institutions, especially as there has been a considerable boom in the number and variety of two-year programs in recent years (Moltz). This boom has created a current demand for more networking, communication, and coalition-forming among high schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions.



Mandates among our bedrock public educational institutions are changing and in many ways expanding. Increasing numbers of high school students are taking Advanced Placement (AP), dual enrollment (DE), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Cambridge (CIE) courses in order to improve their chances of gaining admission to the nation's prestigious and selective post-secondary institutions and also to reduce the tuition burden of higher education.

Several state community college systems are on the cusp of offering four-year degrees in high-demand fields like nursing, health information management, respiratory therapy, dental hygiene, and aerospace manufacturing. Many four-year institutions, in turn, have been asked to standardize their general education course offerings and establish common state transfer general education course numbers for the first two years of post-secondary education.

The tiered or compartmentalized missions of these institutions have become disorganized, increasing the importance of acknowledging the value and rigor of college coursework at all levels, including honors coursework. This acknowledgment must include the ways that two-year institutions respond to the challenge of students who expect enhanced educational experiences and a community of excellence as well as the ways that universities are prepared to mainstream the best and brightest who apply to their programs with significant prior academic preparation in honors.

## **ADVANTAGES TO TWO-YEAR AND FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS**

The advantages of such agreements to two-year and four-year institutions may vary but are clear and considerable. As noted in the NCHC monograph *Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges*, both types of institutions benefit from formally constructed transfer allegiances that encompass retention strategies for degree completion, support honors education readiness, build a foundation for student success, inspire honors institutional programs and partnerships, promote faculty collaboration, and encourage socioeconomic diversity and participation by underrepresented transfer populations (James 58–60). The transfer mission can be successful by maintaining high academic standards, communicating the nuts and bolts of transfer openly, setting aside time for honors-specific transfer recruiting and counseling, setting enrollment targets, and creating a culture of “transfer-going” (Handel 40–44).

Like-minded institutions view honors-to-honors agreements favorably because they encourage access, inclusion, and diversity for all high-achieving students, despite where a student's educational journey begins or ends. In her undergraduate honors thesis, Melissa Gordon, a Stanford University graduate student, confirms a growing body of research asserting that not only are these community college students diverse and underrepresented in our universities, but they are "just as capable as four year students that matriculate from high school" (11).

## **BEST PRACTICES IN CREATING MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING**

One suggestion for such arrangements is that they should be called *memoranda of understanding* (MOUs) rather than articulation agreements in order to reflect the ever-changing, dynamic nature of honors curricula and institutions. In most states, "articulation" implies direct supervision and policy action by boards of higher education. Also, MOUs will have unique features that depend on the missions and visions of the collaborating honors programs. As Handel notes, "The quest for perfect articulation is a fool's game" (43).

Well-constructed honors MOUs are typically divided into three parts: eligibility, implementation, and benefits. The eligibility part of the agreement should specify the number of credits that will be completed at the sending (two-year) institution. Also present should be the minimum cumulative grade point average for application to the receiving (four-year) institution. This statement will include a separate clause about minimum GPA in honors coursework. In this section, any policies about approved honors coursework (credits applied to the receiving institution's program) completed by the student at any previous institution should be noted, including eligibility standards from the receiving institution before transfer is complete. Application requirements, including the sharing of transcripts, should also be provided here. A stepwise explanation of the general process of admissions committee review by the receiving institution should fall at the end of the section, which may include acceptance of the student by the university, including early admission, an individual interview or essay, or a waiver of various application forms.

In the implementation section, the institutions agree on the contractual obligations of the MOU, which include how many honors credits completed at the sending institution will be accepted and applied to the honors program

at the receiving institution and the number of additional honors credits that must be completed upon admission. In our experience with MOUs that we have secured between two-year and four-year institutions, the receiving institution commonly accepts no more than half of its program's required honors credits from the sending institution, i.e., a 24-credit program would accept 12 credits from a sending institution, depending on the sending institution's core curriculum. A statement of binding agreement is included in this section, holding the student and the receiving institution to the specific requirements in effect at the time of acceptance by both parties. A letter of intent signed by the student is advisable. Any language noting that the honors student may apply for individual transfer beyond the boundaries of the agreement—particularly if the student does not complete the sending institution's honors program—is included in the implementation section. Transferability of degree coursework between institutions must be articulated in advance, especially between different states, to ensure students have credit appropriate to both the honors program and the transfer institution.

The benefits section of an honors MOU typically includes information about graduation distinctions that will accrue to transfer students who complete the receiving program's requirements. The section also invites and encourages participation in all honors activities, events, and organizations after or even before the transfer takes place, including possible summer study abroad trips, conferences, or internships. This section should include honors opportunities and membership benefits offered to transfer students, including honors housing, printing and computer lab access, internships, and special gathering spaces. Priority registration, extended library checkout periods, and so forth are also enumerated here.

MOUs typically include language encouraging reviews at regular intervals, such as every two years, as programs and honors liaisons are ever-changing. MOUs must be living documents like the programs from which they originate.

MOUs should always be written down, reviewed, edited, and approved. Those who review, approve, and sign the document should include the honors director, dean, or coordinator, and the administrator(s) who oversee the honors program or college, such as the institutions' provost, vice president of academic affairs, or president. Formal written agreements should never impede transfer but should instead invite a seamless transition between honors programs.

The integrity of agreements requires transformative experiences and rigorous academic programs of study. Programs should be strengthened through collaboration between both institutions. Communication, mutual respect, and flexibility are integral to such relationships; this means that while each institution has expectations regarding what courses should be completed/included in its honors program, understanding the unique expectations and requirements of both honors programs is equally important to the integrity of honors.

Agreements should also provide maximum opportunity for exercises in two-year to four-year faculty and student engagement, collegiality, and social interaction. MOUs should include occasions for inter-institutional resource sharing and an open invitation to shared events, programming, services, and resources. “[S]ocial and academic interactions” between programs “contribute to a student’s sense of belonging to the institution. With sufficient academic and social integration into the educational community, students will likely persist, unless external commitments or changing intentions and goals work against their persistence in a particular institution or even in higher education itself” (Townsend and Wilson 440). Also, honors transfer fairs and visits should be encouraged between the two-year and four-year schools.

Honors student leadership opportunities should be open to transfer students, providing them with occasions to learn the nuances of the institution, such as honors transfer courses, internships, and membership in honors councils and clubs.

## **HONORS TRANSFER SCHOLARSHIPS AND ADVISING**

Reserving honors scholarship funding for transfer students would be beneficial, especially for recruitment, and waiving out-of-state tuition requirements for honors students could also be considered. So-called reverse transfers and stackable credentials should be available when warranted. Four-year institutions are encouraged to meet with students who do not complete a two-year degree or an honors core curriculum at the sending institution but who could still be considered for honors scholarships and inclusion into the four-year honors program, when applicable (see Treat & Barnard 705–06).

Advising relationships are also integral. Transfer advisors must be apprised of possible financial aid ineligibility within the federal academic progress policy as well as special arrangements between institutions regarding credit appropriate to both the honors programs and transfer institutions, especially when students have not acquired a degree at the sending institution.

Any honors credits transferred beyond the allowable transfer credit requirements of the receiving institution will be reviewed and accepted at the discretion of that institution's director or dean.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges to honors programs that are collaborating often involve the substitution of lower-tiered (100–200 level) courses or general education electives. Substitutions should be considered for all tracks and courses so that incoming transfer students (with AS/AA degrees) begin at the junior level; therefore, a third to a half of the collective honors curriculum should be completed upon transfer whenever this is possible without infringing on the integrity of the honors program at either institution.

Components of a collective honors program—in addition to a minimum qualification for maintaining “good standing” in the respective programs, progression and completion standards, and scholarship stipulations/opportunities—might include research/capstone/thesis requirements; interdisciplinary instruction; seminar-style learning; community, service, or campus engagement expectations; study abroad and global studies; enrichment and creative innovation; internships, mentoring, and conferencing opportunities; undergraduate research; and leadership and membership obligations/requirements.

The greatest challenge of all is inertia. Every honors program in the nation has unique qualities, including specialized sequence tracks and specific “honors in the major” courses. These unique components are often the basis of an argument against honors transfer students but should not be a reason to prohibit such transfers or agreements. Honors is not reliant on elaborate plausibility structures for education or strict social arrangements between faculty and students; it is learner-centered and learner-directed, which should be a focus for such agreements.

Ensuring a seamless transition for transfer students requires that these students be prepared for research and find suitable mentors at the four-year institutions. Such relationships often emerge early, so it is important that both institutions attempt to begin this process early or, when possible, hold spots for transfer students who need such mentors.

A possible danger in the transfer process is the potential emphasis on accelerated learning without sufficient opportunities for cultural and social development. According to the NCHC, preparing students for lives of self-reflection, analysis, and creativity is an important aim. Hurrying honors

students through curricular pathways is not recommended because this impedes innovation, collaboration, and creativity. The collaborating honors programs should remain focused on intensive, high-impact learning for all students.

## **NCHC'S FUTURE ROLE**

As Gary Bell points out in a recent *JNCHC* article, private suppliers and for-profits are now competing for the interstices left by the current (and sometimes informal) transfer agreements: "For-profit companies promise that they can provide courses, services, and national ties with prestigious universities that community colleges cannot equal" (22). We believe it is in the best interest of all public honors programs to establish MOUs that will create a bridge for our undergraduate population. Our shared goal is to encourage institutions of higher education to establish these MOUs for students showing impressive academic promise and commitment to public service and civic engagement.

Looking forward, the NCHC Board of Directors has pledged to create an online honors transfer agreement hub where students, faculty, administrators, and staff can share information about transfer partnerships, pre- and post-transfer benefits and privileges, guaranteed or priority acceptance agreements, rewards and scholarships, and requirements for remaining in good standing. The honors transfer hub should offer a visual guide in the form of a key or table with recognizable symbols and nomenclature to help students intuit at a glance the specific responsibilities and recompenses available under partner-school agreements. With the support of NCHC and its member institutions, the overall goal is to share common language for all stages of transfer agreements from beginning to completion. The rewards of such a model are evident in California, a state with a robust enrichment and "intersegmental" transfer alliance system supported by the Honors Transfer Council of California (HTCC) (Kane 37).

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

The goals of honors education are best accomplished across a developmental trajectory within the confines of a four-year educational experience. Barriers to seamless transition between two-year and four-year honors programs risk interrupting that developmental process. Honors programs and colleges are designed to prepare thoughtful and engaged students for lives of

leadership, service, and commitment in an ever-changing global community. Our mutual challenge as educators and guides is to instill in students comprehensive sets of life skills that will prepare them for lives of significance, substance, versatility, and fulfillment. Honors education is thus necessarily a holistic process that sharpens the minds, characters, and senses, a process that is not simple or risk-free: “[H]onors should overreach” in creating vigorous agreements and programs that favor academic achievement so that undergraduates may enjoy the many “positive economic, civic, and social outcomes associated with a baccalaureate degree” (Salas 23).

An honors education is typically accomplished through intensive reading, writing, research, and discussion grounded in a wonderful profusion of pedagogies, strategies, and literatures. This education happens in the classroom, in independent research experiences, and through leadership endeavors and study in the community or overseas. Honors is a serious academic project that provides a platform for students who want to pursue a higher and deeper level of academic challenges and insight, push themselves beyond the normal scope of academia, and commit themselves to a life of service and engagement in their communities through enrichment opportunities and collaborative research endeavors. The collective job of the community, government, and academic institutions is to create a variety of spaces where active and curious students can practice doing extraordinary things and reach outside what they thought was the realm of possibilities.

Aristotle said that a mark of a flourishing person is a welcoming attitude. To this end, most honors colleges and programs foster a culture where students can realize a series of intentionally connected transformative experiences as they engage in conversations and lively experiments that deepen and broaden their understanding of the world, its people, and human potential. We encourage collaborative, cross-disciplinary teams that wrestle with the intense complexity of the big problems facing humanity. We participate in our communities through civic engagement and research; we ensure that numerous people can experience what it is like to teach and learn in a mutually supportive environment; and we cleave to no formula, no template, but look to build shared visions—occasionally to challenge them—and attend to vital human relationships and fundamental priorities.

Though we know almost instinctively that flourishing lives are made possible by the efforts of others, structural impediments can grow and become self-inflicted barriers through accountability structures, enrollment management, progression standards, eligibility criteria, and deadlines. Misalignment



is common enough within institutions and can be considerable between institutions. In academia, one of the greatest obstacles is rigid honors course sequencing and unique, integrated honors courses that restrict access only to traditional students. In this context, the challenge is to counter the structural impediments.

We have NCHC and the support of numerous member institutions to pave the way for honors transfer students to flourish and succeed at both two-year and four-year institutions. Successful honors transfer and transition depend on meaningful partnerships between the sending and receiving institutions, and we therefore encourage new and significant efforts by all institutions to create pathways for our best and brightest undergraduates from high school to community college to university, thus cultivating a community of like-minded students who see the importance of research, academic rigor, enrichment, and leadership in their honors programs and through their commitment to service and civic engagement.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank Andrew Cognard-Black, Director of Research at the National Collegiate Honors Council, for insights gleaned from the NCHC 2014–2015 Admissions, Retention, and Completion Survey, as well as the 2014 Survey of Two-Year Institutions. They also offer a tip of the hat to Katy Patton and Nnachi Umennachi, co-presenters on the NCHC 2015 DIH panel on “Honors to Honors: Partnerships between Community Colleges and Four-Year Programs”; Linda Frost, Tai Houser, and Henley Schimpf, co-discussants at the SRHC 2016 roundtable on “Transferring from Two-Year to Four-Year Honors: Community College Articulation Agreements in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia”; and co-presenter Tai Houser on the NCHC 2016 DIH panel on “Best Practices in Two-Year to Four Year Honors Transfers.”

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## Leveraging a Modest Success for Curriculum Development

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Our primary goal as honors administrators is to deliver the highest-quality honors education we can at our institutions; however, this has become more of a challenge since budgets at state-supported institutions have decreased dramatically over the last decade, a situation that Richard Badenhausen characterizes as the new normal. Although he paints a gloomy picture, Badenhausen also suggests that “[m]oney is always sloshing around in the institutional coffers. . . . You just need to know whom and how to ask . . .” (20). As Samuel Schuman wrote in 2006, we learn early in our honors administrative careers that a healthy relationship between honors and higher administration is essential for honors to flourish at any institution. While deans of honors colleges have structural ties to the higher administration, maintaining a strong relationship is often hard for directors of honors programs who do not have a “seat at the table where budget decisions are made” (Railsback 34). Using my own experience as an honors program director, I can illustrate how important a strong relationship with higher administration is to the health of an honors program. Fostering that relationship allowed me

to secure approval for curricular development that has been key to the success of the program. By accentuating the success of an established, low-cost, and popular one-credit-hour honors symposium, I was able to garner institutional support for three-credit-hour general education honors courses.

At Winthrop University, one of the requirements for an honors program degree is that the students take a one-credit-hour honors symposium during the time they are matriculated. This practice was created some time ago as a way to energize the honors program and to encourage honors students to take interesting courses outside of the mainstream. Both students and faculty hold these one-credit courses in high favor and find them enjoyable. The higher administration approves of these courses because funding them is cheaper than for three-credit courses. The symposia are offered under the honors designator HONR, count as electives, and offer topics that vary widely depending on the faculty teaching the course. Faculty members teach these courses as an overload, but they view them as a laboratory for creating a class on a topic that interests them. Because of their popularity with the faculty, the program has no problem offering two or three per semester.

Faculty are remunerated for teaching a symposium, but their incentive is not primarily financial. Instead, as many have expressed over the years, they find it a joy to teach a subject they care about to a group of excellent and enthusiastic students. Consequently, many of the faculty have taught multiple courses on different topics. Similarly, the students rush to sign up for these courses, most of which fill to capacity soon after registration opens. A sample list of symposium topics indicates their variety in content and discipline:

Jazz History—Swing and Bebop (Music)

Amish Culture (Education)

The Concept of Evil (Sociology)

Women in Science (Biology/Chemistry—co-taught)

Insider/Outsider Art (Art)

How to Get Yourself Killed: Socrates and Jesus (World Languages and Cultures)

Devised Theatre Project 2016: The Past and Future Collide (Theatre)

Seminar on *All the King's Men* (English)

Bad Science (Biology)

How to Die (World Languages and Cultures)

Human Face of Poverty (Religion)

Gender and Sexuality in Theatre and Performance (Theatre)

Microfinance, Transformational Entrepreneurship, and 21st-Century Solutions (Finance)

Empire and Education (Education)

Learning to Guide Your Leadership Efforts (Business)

Cults/New Religious Movements (Religion)

These topics are not prescribed but are created by the individual faculty members.

As often happens, hallway chats and discussions over coffee spawn many new ideas, and during one such chat I realized just how much support these one-credit courses had among the faculty. They couldn't speak highly enough about their experiences, giving me anecdote after anecdote of their class discussions and projects. Parting words were typically "Let me know when I can do it again." At about the same time as these conversations, department chairs were becoming more and more reluctant to offer honors courses given their staffing needs and declining budgets, so three-credit honors offerings in general education were dwindling, and many honors students were relying on honors contracts to fulfill their honors and general education requirements. It occurred to me that faculty might be willing to expand their one-credit laboratory courses into three-credit honors courses in general education. When I asked, many of the faculty were excited about the prospect of developing their one-credit symposium into a course with more depth. If this change were to happen, honors students could then take innovative honors courses to fulfill general education requirements.

As honors program director, I do not make decisions regarding the honors budget, so the onus was on me to convince my dean and academic vice president of the value of these general education honors courses for the program and its students. Since the budget did not have funds available for faculty to teach three-credit courses, my argument needed to be a solid one. In the first meeting with my dean, I stressed how successful the symposium courses had been over the years and also underscored the need to create more options for the honors students, particularly in general education courses. I also emphasized that faculty were not only willing but eager to develop fuller

courses from the existing one-credit symposia. We then spent several meetings discussing how to dovetail the honors curriculum and general education requirements by creating three-credit special topics honors courses, which led her to support the endeavor. As Badenhausen claimed, funds did seem available when you knew how and whom to ask.

With the dean now on board, the next hurdle was to bring the case before the academic vice president. During the fall of 2010, my dean and I met with the academic vice president to discuss creating three-credit honors courses in five different general education areas—natural sciences, humanities and arts, historical perspectives, social sciences, and global perspectives—under five different HONR designators. We eventually convinced the vice president of their merit after some discussion about the level at which the courses should be offered (sophomore as it turned out), and the approvals through the governance process of different committees, councils, and conferences were forthcoming.

The first three-credit special topics honors courses in general education were offered in fall 2011 and included courses titled “Apocryphal Gospels: Texts You Won’t Find in the New Testament” by a philosophy and religion professor and “The Psychology of War” from a faculty member in psychology. In fall 2012, an education professor offered “Comics, Popular Art, and Aesthetics” to fulfill a humanities and arts requirement, and in spring 2015 “Shakespeare the Psychologist” fulfilled a social science requirement.

The first courses offered all started out as one-credit honors symposia from a previous semester, but faculty were also willing to create three-credit courses without having taught a symposium first. Little had I known that faculty were clamoring to offer special topics courses outside or on the fringe of their disciplines, and the honors curriculum paved the way for them to do what they already wanted to do. During the spring 2012 semester, for instance, a professor from theatre and dance created “Theory in the Flesh” to fulfill a humanities and arts general education requirement. Later semesters included a variety of other courses that had not been symposia initially:

The Culture of the Cold War (historical perspectives)

The 1960s: A Transformative Decade of Popular Music and Culture  
(humanities and arts)

Introduction to Global Issues (global perspectives)

Cultural Intelligence from a Global Perspective (global perspectives)

Films of Margarethe von Trotta (humanities and arts)

Prometheus and Punks: Antihero in Western Civilization (humanities and arts)

Study Abroad: Nutritional Biochemistry of the Mediterranean Diet (natural sciences)

The JFK Assassination: Information, Misinformation, and Disinformation (historical perspectives)

Dream in International Cinema (humanities and arts)

As with the symposia, faculty are paid to teach these courses, in many instances now as part of the departmentally assigned course load or as a cross-listed honors course.

My experience illustrates that although creating honors courses on a restricted budget presents challenges, solutions can be found by working with faculty and higher administration to create an exciting curriculum. Expansion of the honors curriculum by transforming one-credit symposia into three-credit special topics courses in honors was the solution we found at Winthrop University. We never would have arrived at this solution if I hadn't paid close attention to those hallways chats. Listening to faculty as well as students can inspire new ideas for structuring a program's offerings, and then shaping those ideas in a way that appeals to higher administrators is the key to creating a stronger program for faculty as well as students.

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# Honors in Practice

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INNOVATIVE IDEAS  
FOR HONORS



# Encouraging Self-Reflection by Business Honors Students: Reflective Writing, Films, and Self-Assessments

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## INTRODUCTION

I never thought that a single book had significantly influenced my teaching methods for honors students until I recently reopened my copy of *The Moral Imagination*, edited by Oliver F. Williams. *The Moral Imagination* is a collection of essays written nearly twenty years ago on how we might teach students to develop a sense of moral imagination through literature, art, and film. The book's subtitle—*How Literature and Films Can Stimulate Ethical Reflection in the Business World*—elucidates the focus of the book, and a good definition for Williams's use of the term "moral imagination" is the "uniquely human ability to conceive of fellow humanity as moral beings and as persons, not as objects whose value rests in utility or usefulness" (Jones).

As with most books I have read, I do not remember exactly why I read *The Moral Imagination* in the first place. I do remember when I first read the

book, though, because it was at the start of my college teaching career eight years ago, when I began collecting books to inform my teaching. Most likely, I found the book because I was searching for materials on teaching business ethics, a subject that receives continuing emphasis in schools of business and that was an early as well as ongoing interest in my college teaching career.

*The Moral Imagination* has several themes that have become the building blocks of my approach to teaching business honors students not only in courses focused on ethics but also in courses on leadership and strategy. After I re-read the book for this article, I had to sheepishly admit to myself that I had forgotten where I had first seen these ideas so thoughtfully presented and had come to think of them as my own—an appropriately humbling experience.

*The Moral Imagination* offers challenges to be overcome in teaching business honors students as well as techniques for “honors distinctiveness” (Cooke 190). The book addresses nine major themes:

**Careerism:** Students, particularly students in professional schools and most particularly students in schools of business, too often ask “What shall I do?” rather than “Who am I?” (Williams i).

**Cultural Literacy:** MBA students, law students, and medical students score poorly on tests in the liberal arts, social sciences, and natural sciences, with MBA students at the bottom of the heap (Williams 20). Michael Goldberg—in his essay in *The Moral Imagination* titled “Doesn’t Anybody Read the Bible Anymo?”—decries the “cultural anorexia” that business and professional school students suffered in the decade or two even before his essay was published in 1997 (Williams 19).

**Integrating Ethics into Day-to-Day Lives:** Reflection on ethical issues promotes the argument that ethics should not be a separate discipline to be learned and repeated, like Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, but rather a sustained way of thinking about ourselves and our relationship with society that should pervade all of our thought processes.

**Imagination and Empathy:** Films, art, and texts that students find engaging cause students to imagine themselves as having had the experiences of others, thereby enhancing their empathy and their ability to see the consequences of their own actions. Research by Evan Kidd and Emanuele Castano has shown that people who have recently read literary fiction perform better on empathy measures, perhaps because they take “an active writerly role” in understanding the inner lives of the characters in the works read (380).

**Vision:** Asking students to find and define the vision for the strategies of their lives, their careers, and their businesses without giving them the experiential tools to do so is like asking students to be fluent in a foreign language without ever asking them to speak the language.

**Critical Thinking:** Requiring that students be analytical spectators of the sometimes messy process by which “facts” emerge in films, books, and art is a necessary complement to the many parts of a business curriculum that emphasize “the facts of the matter” (Williams 22), causing them to think critically about what plays out in front of them in their lives.

**Inner Lives:** The business world has no structure for “silent reflection and the grueling inner work that moral introspection requires” (Williams 29), so showing students how to provide such structure for themselves while in college may help to develop their inner lives once in business. Martha Nussbaum argues that the liberal arts cause us to examine our “insides” (85–87).

**Self-Awareness:** Requiring students to think about themselves in a critical way can help improve their emotional intelligence by promoting their self-awareness.

**Synthesis:** Business school curricula too often offer courses that are discipline-specific, rarely including information from other business disciplines, let alone disciplines outside of business. Life is not neatly divided into disciplines.

These nine themes at the heart of *The Moral Imagination* inspired the structure of my honors course in business leadership, which I describe in the following section, after which I delve into the specific learning activities that I have used to apply the themes, i.e., reflective writing, film analysis, and self-assessments. These techniques might be useful in honors courses not only in business but, for instance, in general courses on ethics or leadership.

## BUSINESS HONORS LEADERSHIP COURSE

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) is a typical university setting for a separate honors curriculum. Liberal arts students are in the minority at this healthcare-focused research university of approximately 18,000 students, about a third of whom are undergraduates in the school of arts and sciences.

Curricula at the university reflect the healthcare strategy of the institution. New majors that have been developed in recent years often have a healthcare focus. Numerous interdisciplinary majors, such as biomedical engineering, involve health disciplines, and non-healthcare departments are encouraged to offer interdisciplinary courses with health-related departments. The school of business, for instance, has tracks within majors that have a healthcare emphasis, and entire courses throughout the university's curriculum have a healthcare focus, e.g., the economics of healthcare or medical sociology. Faculty integrate healthcare into a wide range of courses; for example, in my course on strategic leadership, during which I invite CEOs to interact with students, about a quarter of the invited speakers typically come from healthcare fields.

Over thirty percent of students at the university are first-generation college students, many coming from high schools outside of large metropolitan areas, and the university's healthcare focus is a major draw. Biology is the intended major of many incoming students to the university's honors college, of which my business-focused honors program is a part, although some decide later to major in a business discipline. Even though all students are required to have at least four three-hour courses in the fine arts and humanities, business students, including honors students, rarely take more than the minimum. We accept non-business majors into our business honors program, but their majors are usually in the sciences or social sciences.

I became the director of our undergraduate business honors program in 2008. The school of business has approximately two thousand undergraduate students and six hundred graduate students. I was asked to develop a new curriculum for the program, focused on business leadership. I maintained the selectivity requirements for the program, which are based on an overall GPA, a school of business GPA, and faculty recommendations. The program today has thirty to thirty-five students in each cohort, which I consider the maximum number for maintaining an honors seminar experience. I developed a curriculum consisting of three three-hour courses: (1) an introduction to leadership course (the subject of this article), (2) a strategic leadership course; and (3) an independent research course. Students in the first course are usually in the second semester of their junior year and complete the independent research course in their final semester as seniors.

The teaching techniques described in the introductory course on leadership are my attempts at best practices in honors pedagogy and not simply "good teaching practices" (Fuiks 105). As Laird Edman states in his Conclusion to the 2000 NCHC monograph *Teaching and Learning in Honors*,

“Honors pedagogy nurtures and challenges students to become self-motivated, self-regulating engaged thinkers” (Fuiks 103). The learning activities in my course are designed to accomplish this goal.

A variety of textbooks on leadership, including many on business leadership, can help build a course like mine. I eventually settled on a relatively slim offering by David Shriberg and Arthur Shriberg, *Practicing Leadership*. Initially, I started with a more traditional, much longer textbook by one of the major textbook publishers. The students did not read it, and I did not enjoy teaching from it because it could take the most fascinating topics in leadership and make them dry and formulaic. No amount of “sidebar” examples could liven them up. With several important exceptions, *Practicing Leadership* reflects the topics that I think are necessary in an introductory course on leadership, and reading it represents only about 10% or less of the total learning activities.

The learning modules in the course are as follows, reflecting my overall goal of starting with the students’ inner lives and moving to their external lives to teach them about how they can become leaders:

- Introduction to the course: Why study leadership?
- History of the study of leadership
- Psychology and leadership: traits and characteristics
- Psychology and leadership: motivation and communication
- Teams and leadership
- Leadership styles
- Negotiation and leadership
- Entrepreneurship and leadership
- Creativity and leadership
- Leadership and diversity
- Servant leadership
- Leadership and ethical decision-making
- Team exercises on leadership skills

The course ratings are consistently the highest of my course ratings as a professor each semester and among the highest in our school of business.

Student comments encourage me that learning objectives are being met. One student wrote, “I not only gained knowledge in this class, but I grew as a person. Mr. Yoder helped me have the confidence in myself that I was lacking. I had heard from others and could see through my achievements that I was intelligent, but I was always second guessing myself and now know that I do know the answers.” Another wrote, “I understand this is a business honors class, but this class has truly been inspiring. It has allowed me to see certain viewpoints and strengthened my beliefs in different fields.” Student ratings for this course are slightly higher than those for the remaining two courses in the honors program, but this might be explained by the somewhat greater rigor of the second two courses, particularly the independent research required in the final course.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Reflective Writing

One of the cornerstone learning activities in the introductory course on leadership is a reflective journal that I set up for students inside the course’s learning management system, Canvas. Unlike Blackboard, which has a specific function called “Journal” that allows students to communicate privately with the instructor, Canvas does not have a specific function for journaling, but I use the “Assignment” function and ask that students submit a reflective text paragraph or two each week on that class’s topic. Canvas allows me to comment on each submission, which I try to do on a weekly basis. I try to be reflective myself in my comments to serve as a model for students. Only the student and I can see the student’s journal, which counts for 20% of the final grade. Over the course of the semester, the students have each created a cumulative journal, and I encourage them periodically to look back at their earlier reflections.

During the first class and often in my private comments on their journal entries after that, I describe for students what I mean by “self-reflective” writing: “Don’t tell me what I told you, because I know that already”; “Tell me what you know about yourself that you did not know before”; “Tell me how this might have transformed you, even if just a bit.” I also give them prompts such as the following:

- “Thinking back on this, I . . .”
- “I had always assumed that . . .”



- “I never thought of this connection before, but . . .”
- “My emotions while reading or thinking about this were. . .”

In the 2015 volume of *Honors in Practice*, Kathy J. Cooke describes a similar device she has used with her honors students called “First-Person Noting.” Cooke writes,

Through First-Person Noting, students observe and acknowledge the subjective elements of their academic experience, in particular the thoughts, sensations, and feelings that occur while they read, write, listen, discuss, and reflect. (190).

Cooke observes that the roots of First-Person Noting lie in mindfulness meditation, often associated with Jon Kabat-Zinn (Cooke 191).

In order to explain to students why I have them write reflectively, I also compare reflective thinking with critical thinking, explaining that reflective thinking and writing are more about making judgments while critical writing and thinking are more about solving problems. Some students have more trouble than others being self-reflective, unwilling to offer me a peek inside their minds, preferring instead to give me a recitation of what I said during class. This reticence could be an outgrowth of the careerist attitude among some professional school students, who view reflection as less important to their vocations than remembering rules. I am trying to push students up the “DIKW” hierarchy—from Data and Information, to Knowledge and Wisdom—described by Larry Crockett in the NCHC monograph *Teaching and Learning in Honors* (Fuiks 22).

In addition to the semester-long reflective journal, I assign longer reflective essays on two of the leadership topics that lend themselves to more complete analysis: the students’ own traits and characteristics, as expressed in a Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator (MBTI) and the students’ own experiences with a “servant leader,” defined by Robert Greenleaf as a “servant first” who then makes a “conscious choice . . . to aspire to lead” (Greenleaf Center). These essays together count for 15% of the total grade. In addition to the reflective content, these essays give me a window on students’ ability to organize their thoughts in multi-paragraph writing, with an introduction, a logical progression of ideas, topic sentences, and a conclusion. These skills are not always present in business students.

The reflective writing required in this course should help prepare students for their independent research in the final course of the program, one year

later, by giving them confidence that they have the ability to do more than merely acquire the Data and Information produced by others (Fuiks 22). The process of reflecting can demonstrate to them that they have the ability to create new Knowledge and achieve Wisdom, if only about themselves. The same skills can be applied to the world around them.

## Films

Oliver Williams's collection of essays, described at the beginning of this essay, caused me to consider seriously the use of films as a teaching tool for ethical reflection. I have since extended their use to reflection on other topics in leadership education. The essays in *The Moral Imagination* showed me how to use not only films with business settings, such as *The Apartment* and *Glen-garry Glen Ross*, to teach business ethics (Williams 127–42) but also films set outside the world of business, such as *Dead Poets Society* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Williams 19–32).

With business students, films have an advantage over literature for their novelty in a business course syllabus. In addition, we cannot always expect even high-achieving honors students in professional fields to read great literary works—like those of Dickens—that focus on the moral imagination. Finally, the advent of technologies that allow students not only to access films easily from sites such as YouTube and Netflix but also to play them conveniently on devices such as their smart phones makes movies a popular learning activity among my students.

Films allow students to reflect on an experience. John Dewey argues that education should be the “reconstruction or reorganization of experience” (81), and reflection on an experience necessarily involves self-reflection because, as Carol Rodgers has written, “An experience is not an experience unless it involves interaction between the self and another person, the material world, an idea, or whatever constitutes the environment at hand” (846).

At the beginning of the course, I divide students into teams, which remain in place throughout the semester, based on their preferences for studying and presenting on one of the films used in the course. Not surprisingly, the older, less well-known films (often in black and white) are the least-requested. However, most students assigned to such films acknowledge their value after studying them. The teams work together not only to analyze and present on their respective films but also to confer and then jointly critique the presentations of the other film teams. The team presentations count for 25% of the total grade. Each team is instructed to work ahead in the learning activities

for the module in which their film is used and to assist me in presenting the leadership themes illustrated in their film.

### *Cast Away* and *Twelve O'Clock High*: Motivation and Communication

The first film in the learning module on motivation and communication is *Cast Away* (2000). In this module, we study Maslow's hierarchy of needs in order to understand how leaders should motivate followers and themselves. The film begins with a hard-charging business executive, Chuck Noland (Tom Hanks), seemingly at the top of his career but apparently too busy to fulfill the personal side of his life. After his airplane crashes, Chuck is the sole survivor on a deserted island and must revert back to the bottom of the hierarchy of needs and tend to his food, safety, and shelter. We are left wondering at the end of the film whether he will achieve the higher-order needs for love and belonging and for self-actualization.

I ask students to consider how Maslow's hierarchy can apply in a work setting, posing questions like "What role does providing a suitable workspace for employees serve?" and "Is there value in throwing the occasional pizza party to celebrate a job well done?" We discuss the book *The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work*, in which Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer show that the most creative workers are those whose "inner work lives" are nourished with a sense of progress provided by their leaders, and we consider whether Chuck survives because he learns to appreciate the "small wins." *Cast Away* also allows for a fruitful discussion of empathy, which according to Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* is a key element of EI, the others being self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and social skill.

*Cast Away* is the first of several movies starring Tom Hanks that I use in this course, and I could use even more, e.g., *Captain Phillips* (2013), to illustrate leadership themes. I ask students to reflect on how Hanks might go about choosing his movie roles and whether he is purposefully choosing leadership-themed roles. For at least some students, this is the first time they have considered that movies can be made, or that actors can choose their roles, in order to illustrate a theme related to business.

*Twelve O'Clock High* (1949) provides a stark contrast to *Cast Away*: it is filmed in black and white; its actors are people that many students have never heard of, and it is set during World War II, with which many students are relatively unfamiliar. Consequently, this film is rarely a team's first choice.

The film tells the story of Air Force Brigadier General Frank Savage (Gregory Peck), who takes over command of a bombing group with a poor success record and poor morale. His first leadership style is harshly authoritarian; he delivers the following words to his men to address their natural fears of flying bombing missions over enemy territory: "I'm not trying to tell you not to be afraid. Fear is normal. But stop worrying about it and about yourselves. Stop making plans. Forget about going home. Consider yourselves already dead." Students can see right away that such a speech is probably not an effective motivational technique. Later, Savage's leadership evolves into an exhausting, pacesetting style in which he personally flies on many of his unit's bombing missions, leaving Savage unable to speak at the end of the movie even though the performance record of his unit has improved dramatically. The film raises important questions about how a leader should act in a crisis. The ambiguity about whether Frank Savage was a successful leader also provides good material for reflection on the relative rarity of clearly happy endings in movies and in life.

### *Saving Private Ryan:* Leadership Styles

Another war-themed film in the learning module on leadership styles is *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). After a focus in the first several learning modules on innate characteristics of leaders and their followers that cannot be easily changed, we move to a portfolio of styles that can be developed and used by leaders to inspire followers. Once again, Daniel Goleman in *Leadership that Gets Results* has provided the structure for this topic with his inventory of leadership styles: coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and coaching (9). Referring back to Frank Savage's pacesetting in *Twelve O'Clock High*, we can see the relationship between motivation and styles of leadership.

In *Saving Private Ryan*, Tom Hanks has once again made a movie that beautifully illustrates leadership principles. His Captain John Miller is appropriately authoritarian and coercive when his men are being shot at upon landing on the Normandy beaches at the beginning of the film. Throughout the film, he is one of the men, coaching and pacesetting. At one point he polls his men on what they think he should do, illustrating a democratic style. One of the most dramatic scenes in the film comes when his men are in deep disagreement with their mission. He then reveals that he is a high school English teacher and that his motivation is simply to get back to his life in Pennsylvania,

raising the question of whether a leader should reveal personal details to followers and, if so, when.

The discussion of *Saving Private Ryan* illustrated that students can find things in a film that teachers had not thought of, even after using it as a teaching tool for years. One recent team, for example, pointed out that Matt Damon's Private Ryan character also demonstrated the affiliative style of leadership by refusing to leave his military "brothers" even though three of his real-life brothers had recently died in battle.

Finally, *Saving Private Ryan* provides some wonderful examples of low emotional intelligence in characters such as the belligerent Sergeant Mike Horvath and the hapless interpreter Timothy Upham.

### *Miracle and Remember the Titans:* Leadership and Teams

Two films that students often chose first for their teams were *Miracle* (2004), the story of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team, and *Remember the Titans* (2000), the story of a football team at a recently integrated high school in 1970s Richmond, Virginia. Both films have actors who are familiar to students (Kurt Russell in *Miracle*, and Denzel Washington in *Remember the Titans*).

In this learning module, students learn about the stages of team development first described by Bruce Tuckman in his 1965 article "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups": forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning (396–97). Both films have happy endings with highly functioning teams. Along the way, however, mainly in the storming phases, we see some classically bad team behaviors. With the emphasis on group and team work in schools today (see *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* by Susan Cain), all students have experienced one or more of these dysfunctions, making great fodder for reflection. In that regard, I also invite students to reflect on how their team experiences in this course, where all of the students are high-achieving honors students, differ from their other heterogeneous teams.

We recall the students' traits and characteristics as well in this module, looking at what the students' MBTI types add, or subtract, from a team and considering whether diligent INTJs for instance, realize that they can come off as impatient with others. I encourage reflection and critical thinking about what might be the MBTI types of the characters in *Miracle* and *Remember the Titans* and how they help or hinder their leadership. Teaching students about teams creates an awareness of a "community of learning," which is then

reinforced by the team film assignments and team discussions (Linda Rutland Gillison in Fuiks 106).

### *12 Angry Men:* Leadership and Negotiation

For our learning module on negotiations, we go back several decades to another black and white film, *12 Angry Men* (1957), with which most students are not familiar. I tell the students that in 1957 the cast of *12 Angry Men* was an all-star lineup and, if made today with the same caliber of actors, would feature Hollywood's best. As this film opens, Juror number eight, the Henry Fonda character, is the lone not-guilty vote on the first jury ballot in the trial of a young minority man accused of murder.

In this module, I use the book *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* by Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton. The authors analyze the three most common negotiation techniques: power, rights, and interests, concluding that finding mutual interests is ultimately the most effective technique because power can be fleeting and rights can be unclear. Negotiating based on mutual interests requires good listening skills as well as good communication skills.

Juror number eight exemplifies the *Getting to Yes* preferred style of negotiation by listening and persuading. He has healthy skepticism, giving him the ability to suspend judgment until he has been able to analyze the situation. By contrast, several jurors unsuccessfully attempt to use power (yelling) and rights ("the defendant's lawyers would have told us that if it were true"). I ask students to reflect on how they negotiate in their own lives, in their relationships with their parents, and in their relationships with professors, analyzing when they do and do not have power in their negotiations.

### *The Social Network:* Leadership and Entrepreneurship

*The Social Network* (2010) is one of the most recent films I use in this course. The ubiquity of Facebook (the subject of the film) piques their interest and makes the team for this film a popular choice among the students. I added this module to the course in the past few years due to the increasing focus on entrepreneurship in schools of business. Entrepreneurship is not covered in the Shriberg textbook that I use in the course, so I add other learning activities such as excerpts from *Brewing Up a Business*, the story of Sam Calagione's creation of Dogfish Head Craft Brewery.

*The Social Network* demonstrates the often precarious nature of entrepreneurial teams with its unsympathetic portrayal of how Mark Zuckerberg treated his colleagues. Students note that Zuckerberg, at least as played in the film, succeeded as an entrepreneur but failed as a friend. On the positive side, students can picture in Zuckerberg the common characteristics of an entrepreneur: his desire for autonomy, his creativity, his need for achievement, and his risk-taking.

I have also used *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006) in this module. Starring Will Smith, this film tells the true story of a homeless man, Chris Gardner, raising a young son alone and seeking to break into the ruthlessly competitive business of retail stock brokerage. The film illustrates how one can be entrepreneurial by entering a brand new field with little or no experience. Gardner shares the positive need for the autonomy, creativity, achievement, and risk-taking characteristics of Mark Zuckerberg but is much more likeable. The film also can provoke a powerful discussion of Maslow's hierarchy of needs as students experience how Gardner and his son sleep on the floor of a subway bathroom.

### *Apollo 13:* Leadership and Creativity

Creativity is a nontraditional topic for an introductory course in leadership, but if we are going to illustrate for students how entrepreneurial leaders work, and if a key element of being an entrepreneur is creativity, then this topic is appropriate. One of the key ideas is that the term means more than artistic creativity but should be viewed as the cognitive process of making novel things useful in all contexts. With that definition, students discover how creativity is important in the business world. The Apple iPhone was both novel and useful. Microsoft's "Kin" phone, which failed after just a few months on the market in 2010, was neither.

*Apollo 13* (1995) serves as a history lesson as well as a lesson on creativity as a cognitive style and not just as artistry. Most students have not seen the film and know very little about the aborted lunar landing mission in 1970 that is the subject of the film. As described in the self-assessments section below, before the *Apollo 13* student team makes its presentation, all students have taken the KAI Adaptor-Innovator self-assessment to determine whether their cognitive style is more "adaptive" or "innovative." The astronauts in the film nicely demonstrate one and sometimes both of these styles. Commander Jim Lovell, played by Tom Hanks (making his third appearance in the course),



clearly has the analytical, by-the-book characteristics of an Adaptor, but he also shows some Innovator characteristics as he accepts the grim situation enveloping him and his crew. The clearest Innovator is on the ground, Flight Director Gene Kranz (Ed Harris), who among many other tasks necessary to get the astronauts back to earth must find a way for the command module's square air filters to work in the lunar module's round receptacles. In true Innovator style, at one point Kranz declares, "I don't care about what anything was DESIGNED to do, I care about what it CAN do."

### *The Apartment* and *The Devil Wears Prada*: Leadership and Diversity

We cover all dimensions of diversity in this module: gender, culture, age, race, and more. *The Apartment* (1960) and *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) are designed to provoke reflection on gender diversity by providing a window into the evolution of the roles of women in business over nearly half a century. Not surprisingly given its vintage, very few students volunteer to be a member of *The Apartment* presenting team. On the other hand, *The Devil Wears Prada* has been among the most-requested film teams in the course.

*The Apartment* is set in a large, faceless insurance company in an equally faceless high-rise office building. The black and white photography and seeming acres of grey metal desks with manual typewriters and calculators combine to make a job at a big business seem like a monotonous chore to be endured. The film, which won a Best Picture Oscar in 1960, tells the story of "Bud" Baxter (Jack Lemmon) working his way up through the organization, in part by allowing his all-male superiors to use his apartment for extramarital trysts. What I ask students to focus on, however, is the film's depiction of women in business in the 1950s and early 1960s. Shirley MacLaine plays an elevator operator, an occupation not known to most college students today. She is "dating" Baxter's married boss, Jeff Sheldrake (Fred MacMurray), and has visited Baxter's apartment with Sheldrake. While on duty in her elevator cab, she is pinched, teased, and otherwise sexually harassed and, most humiliatingly, coldly treated by Mr. Sheldrake, whom she somehow seems to have loved. Other female characters include Mr. Sheldrake's vindictive secretary, known only as "Miss Olsen" (Edie Adams), herself a former girlfriend of her boss; she is fired when she reveals Sheldrake's assignations to his suburban stay-at-home wife. *The Apartment* provides a good platform for discussing the origins of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in which "sex" was included as a



basis on which employment decisions could not be made and which has been applied to make illegal the types of sexual harassment shown in this film.

I was inspired to use *The Apartment* in the course (I remember seeing the movie in the back seat of my parents' car at a drive-in movie theater and being thoroughly bored) by Dennis McCann's essay "If Life Hands You a Lemmon: Business Ethics from *The Apartment* to *Glengarry Glen Ross*" in Williams's *The Moral Imagination*. I ask students one of the questions suggested by McCann in his essay: Is this really a movie about business, or is business merely a setting for a movie about bad ethics? (Williams 132). McCann also regards Jack Lemmon in the same way I regard Tom Hanks, as an actor with an uncanny ability to choose films with meaning. I follow this learning module deliberately with a module based on *Glengarry Glen Ross*, featuring Jack Lemmon thirty-two years later in his acting career.

Juxtaposed in the same module with *The Apartment* is *The Devil Wears Prada*. Also set in an urban high-rise office building, *The Devil Wears Prada* tells the story of another rising professional. This time, however, the aspirant is female, Andrea Sachs (Anne Hathaway), as is her boss, fashion magazine editor Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep). On the surface, women seem to have come a long way since the days of *The Apartment*, but at a price. Miranda is more than just cold; she is imperious and mean-spirited, abruptly ending conversations with Andrea by sniffing, "That's all." The film raises the question whether domination is the only way that women can be taken seriously as leaders in business or whether women can show warmth and still be leaders. Most students do not realize that the Miranda Priestly character is likely based on the real-life editor of *Vogue* magazine, Anna Wintour.

### *Glengarry Glen Ross*: Leadership and Ethical Decision-Making

The last film I use in the course is *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1996). This movie reveals a cornucopia of unethical business practices that include lying to customers, selling sales leads to competitors, and firing loyal but under-performing employees down on their luck. Particularly poignant is the character played by a much older Jack Lemmon, Shelley "The Machine" Levene. Shelley was once the star salesman at the real estate firm, but he has been in a sustained sales slump. To further complicate his life, his daughter is hospitalized with an undiagnosed chronic illness. Desperate, Shelley attempts to bribe his boss, John Williamson (Kevin Spacey), to give him good sales leads,

and he impersonates a wealthy client in a scheme by another salesman. *Glen-garry Glen Ross* brutally illustrates the dilemma at the heart of the concept of moral imagination: Is it necessary to act unethically in order to succeed in business? The film also can introduce the subject of moral psychology as a tool in business ethics education by exploring the psychological reasons that people make bad ethical decisions. The film examines why a good person like Shelley Levene would fall prey to unethical business practices and asks its viewers, including my students, whether they would act the same way in the same circumstances.

## SELF-ASSESSMENTS

If I could choose just one learning objective for this course on leadership, it would be to promote students' monitoring their inner lives or what Goleman calls "Self-Awareness." According to Goleman, Self-Awareness has three competencies:

- Emotional Awareness: Recognizing one's emotions and their effects.
- Accurate Self-Assessment: Knowing one's strengths and limits.
- Self-Confidence: A strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities.  
(*Emotional Intelligence* (46–55))

Goleman says that self-awareness "trains our attention to notice subtle, but important signals, and to see thoughts as they arise rather than just being swept away by them" ("Q&A"). The assessments I assign to students are powerful triggers for self-reflection.

Self-assessments are also an element of honors pedagogy. In his chapter in the Fuiks monograph, Laird Edman says that "unless students learn to self-assess, learn what they know and do not know and how to judge the difference, they have not learned much in our courses that will transfer out of those courses" (Fuiks 108).

Beginning with the learning module on the traits and characteristics of a leader, I use five self-administered self-assessments over the course of the semester to enhance awareness of all three of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence competencies and to provoke self-reflection. Taking and reporting on the five assessments count as part of students' discussion and participation grade, which is approximately 25% of the total grade.

## Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) Assessment

The MBTI is a self-report designed to indicate preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. Many other tools are available to categorize and describe individuals' traits and characteristics, such as DiSC (dominance, influence, steadiness, and compliance) and Gallup Strengths-Finder. However, I learned the fundamentals of MBTI when I was in business before entering higher education, and I understand that it is still commonly used in business. I tell students that I do not care exactly which tool they use to inspect their own traits and characteristics so long as they can and do apply what they learn in their personal and professional lives. I also caution them not to use what they learn about themselves as excuses for bad behavior.

I direct students to take one of several online assessments available for the MBTI, e.g., the Jung Typology Test, and ask them to give me both their four MBTI dimensions (Introvert vs. Extrovert; Intuitive vs. Sensing; Thinking vs. Feeling; and Judging vs. Perceiving) as well as the strength of their preferences in each of these dimensions. If a student has a low preference for a particular dimension, a re-taking of the assessment could show a slight preference for the opposite side of that dimension, and the student should be open to learning more about that opposite side.

We discuss the most common MBTI types for business honors students and why these types would be typical for them. We discuss whether students with a strong "Judging" preference for structure and planning get better grades in college or whether accounting majors are more likely to be Sensors, making decisions by using all five senses rather than intuition. I try to provide real-life illustrations of the various MBTI types even though very few, if any, celebrities or historical figures have revealed their MBTI scores.

One of the two longer self-reflective essays in the course is based on what students learn about themselves from taking the MBTI assessment. Students uniformly report that they were not surprised by their results even if they had never before thought about the MBTI dimensions. I sprinkle MBTI references throughout the rest of the course, particularly in our discussion and reflection on teams. There, the students look at their own film presentation teams and reflect on what each MBTI type adds to or detracts from a team. For example, an Introverted-Intuitive-Thinking-Judger (INTJ) may add to a team by analyzing all the alternatives but hurt a team by moving too fast. Even without prompting, students often refer back to their MBTI results in their reflections on other parts of the course.

## Social Sensitivity Assessment

In our module on motivation and communication, we discuss that leaders must learn to listen to all forms of communication from those around them. Research on “collective intelligence” has shown evidence that just as an individual’s general intelligence can be measured, a group can have a collective intelligence that explains its performance on tasks. The research has further shown that three factors are significantly correlated with collective intelligence: (1) average “social sensitivity” is positively correlated; (2) a small number of people dominating the group’s conversations is negatively correlated; and (3) a high proportion of women in the group is positively correlated (Woolley et al. 688).

The assessment tool used in the collective intelligence research to measure social sensitivity is the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test, in which participants view thirty-six photographs of a human’s eyes and choose which of two adjectives better describes the person’s mental state. The assessment was created by psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen, an expert on autism, and is available online (see References for the link). The typical scores range from twenty-two to thirty correct answers out of thirty-six. Women typically score higher than men.

I ask students to take the assessment before our class on motivation and communication and send me their scores, which I then summarize anonymously at the start of the class. We discuss whether a high score might positively correlate with an MBTI “Feeling” dimension, i.e., making decisions based on their effects on others rather than on strict analysis. We discuss empathy as an element of Emotional Intelligence and discuss whether the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test can measure empathy. In later classes, we discuss what effect social sensitivity might have on the functioning of a team and on the ability to be an effective negotiator. Students self-reflect on all of these questions in their journals, producing some good introspection even from students who are otherwise reticent. More than one student in a recent class pointed out that the television series *Lie to Me* features a detective with a high level of social sensitivity.

## General Enterprising Tendency Assessment

Before our class on entrepreneurship and leadership, students take a self-assessment test called the General Enterprising Tendency Test, version 2, or GET2. This test measures some of the same tendencies of entrepreneurs

described above: autonomy, creativity, a need for achievement, and risk-taking. Completing the test takes about ten minutes and provides an idea of a person's "enterprising potential," defined as the "tendency to start up and manage projects" (Caird 4). Scores can range from very enterprising, to having some enterprising qualities, to "you are probably happiest working with guidance from superiors" (Caird 15).

I find that discussion of this self-assessment can lead to some breakthroughs on self-awareness among students in their reflective journals. Business students are increasingly hearing that entrepreneurs are valued: "Entrepreneurs are the future of the economy." Business schools are creating innovation labs that encourage students to incubate entrepreneurial ideas. Students who score highly on the GET2 assessment likely feel good about such messages and initiatives, and those who do not likely feel queasy, leading to questions about the role for those who are not entrepreneurial: whether they can still be involved in entrepreneurial activities and still be leaders or whether they can be "intrapreneurs" who promote innovation within an established organization (Caird 4).

## Cognitive Style Assessment

We cover individuals' cognitive styles in our module on creativity, where *Apollo 13* is a tool for reflecting on how individuals can think through a difficult problem. Cognitive style is not the same thing as cognitive ability, which is usually measured by an intelligence test.

To measure students' cognitive styles, I use an assessment first developed by British psychologist Michael Kirton in 1976, called the Kirton Adaptation-Innovation Inventory (KAI). Kirton concluded that an individual's preferred approach to problem-solving can be placed on a continuum ranging from "Adaptation" to "Innovation" (623). According to Kirton, "Adapters" solve problems by using what is provided to them whereas "Innovators" solve problems using untried techniques. Participants rate themselves against thirty-two personality traits, such as "Solutions sought by tried and true methods" vs. "Use unproven ideas in seeking solutions" (Bobic et al. 31). The actual test is written in simple language so that cognitive level should not affect results. Other tools can measure cognitive style with more dimensions than the KAI test, but for purposes of this introductory course I find that Kirton's assessment is sufficient, and I have developed a shortened version of the test that I have placed in a Quiz in the Canvas learning management system for the course. For an excellent treatment of the role creativity plays in leadership,

see *Creative Leadership: Skills That Drive Change* (2nd ed.) by Gerard Puccio, Marie Mance, and Mary Murdock. These authors have developed a thinking style assessment called The FourSight Thinking Profile, designed to help teams “communicate, collaborate and problem solve.”

Taking the KAI test invites self-awareness not only by revealing a student’s own place on the Adaptor-Innovator continuum but also by revealing how others might view his or her style. For example, others might view a strong Adaptor as “compliant” or “dogmatic” and see a strong Innovator as “impractical” or “undisciplined.” Knowing how others see us is a key element of Emotional Intelligence.

## Negotiating Style Assessment

I devote two separate modules to negotiation. As *The New York Times* columnist David Brooks has written, universities should be delivering two types of knowledge: first, technical knowledge about *what* to do; and second, practical knowledge, which is *how* to do it. Brooks believes that as online education becomes more pervasive, universities will have to get better at delivering practical knowledge because students will be able to find their technical knowledge from a wide array of distant providers. I believe that negotiation skills are just the sort of practical knowledge that our students will need, particularly business honors students who we hope will be leading business organizations someday.

Having used the film *12 Angry Men* to explore the concepts of negotiation in *Getting to Yes*, we devote the last class of the semester to various negotiating exercises to give students practice in the actual art of negotiation, including the “ugly oranges” exercise (see Barkai). In that exercise, pairs of students negotiate over who should get a shipment of rare oranges, where each student has an important purpose to be served if he or she gets the oranges. One student believes she needs the rinds of the oranges to neutralize a toxic gas on a tropical island. The other believes he needs the juice of the oranges to help the mothers of unborn children suffering from a rare condition. At the start of the exercise, neither student knows why the other needs the oranges or what part of the oranges the other needs. The goal is to demonstrate that through good listening and communication, both parties can get what they want from the negotiation.

Prior to the final class, I have students complete an online self-assessment based on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument that I have adapted from *The Labor Relations Process* (Holley, Jennings, & Wolters) and

made into a Quiz in Canvas. This exercise is designed to identify which of five negotiation styles students prefer: Avoiding, Competing, Accommodating, Compromising, or Collaborating. These styles can be plotted in a grid with two dimensions: Assertiveness and Cooperativeness. For example, Avoiding would be in the lower left quadrant of the grid as low in both Assertiveness and Cooperativeness. At the opposite corner of the grid would be Collaborating, which is high in both dimensions. A Compromising style would be in the middle of the grid, moderate in both dimensions. I do not tell students in advance exactly why I am having them take this assessment and do not label it as a “negotiation style” assessment so that I can make special pairings for the “ugly oranges” exercise, with concentrations or mixtures of the various styles in the pairings. After the pairs negotiate, we discuss whether the Avoiders and Competers were more likely to withhold information about why they needed the oranges than the Collaborators and Compromisers. We consider whether the Competers were more likely to see negotiation as a zero-sum game than Collaborators, whether collaboration was always the most successful style, and whether a Competer would always win when paired with an Accommodator or Avoider. The exercise presents great opportunities for students to examine their inner lives reflectively.

## CONCLUSION

As Fuijs has argued, honors pedagogy should challenge students “to become self-motivated, self-regulating engaged thinkers” (103). In my course, student reading and instructor-led classroom discussion of the concepts of self-awareness and emotional intelligence lay the groundwork for the importance of self-knowledge in a leader. Watching and analyzing movies and reading fiction allow students to practice active, “writerly” thinking in order to understand the characters in these works. The self-assessments provide the students a window into themselves, and the reflective journaling encourages them to describe what they have seen.

The violinist Isaac Stern beautifully illustrated the importance of pausing amid the torrent of events that come at us in life. Stern was asked why all musicians presumably play the same notes in the same order and yet some sound much better than others. His response: “But it isn’t the notes that are important, it’s the intervals between the notes” (“Wisdom”). Self-reflection provides intervals in the lives of students that can make their personal and professional lives more melodious.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I thank my daughter, Caroline Yoder Cohen, AB, MS, RD, for her assistance in the research and editing of this article.

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# Interdisciplinary Teaching of Theatre and Human Rights in Honors

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One of the centerpieces of honors education is careful research and thorough analysis of what we teach and why we teach our chosen subjects. In creating my honors class Theatre and Human Rights, I explored how I would teach the course and the various components best suited to teaching this topic. After first considering the topic of human rights and its relevance to theatre in an honors context, I then considered the value of interdisciplinary teaching in such a course and what its impact could be on helping students understand human rights, specifically through the study of Athol Fugard's 1982 play *"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys*. Considering the topic of theatre and human rights, its background, pedagogy, and philosophy may provide an example of the kind of work that goes into making honors education a distinct segment of higher education in North America today.

## BACKGROUND

Since spring 2012, I have taught a 300-level Theatre and Human Rights class in the University of New Mexico Honors College. The class includes

fourteen twentieth-century plays written by playwrights from nine countries as well as excerpts from three secondary sources: Andrew Clapham's *Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction*, Micheline R. Ishay's *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches and Documents from the Bible to the Present*, and Paul Rae's *Theatre and Human Rights*. The plays and secondary sources address a variety of human rights concerns from the impact of war on humanity and the environment to racial, ethnic, gender, and LGBTQ+ discrimination. We consider each topic within its national context, but each topic is also universal, addressing ongoing human rights concerns.

For example, we end the course with *Angels in America*, Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize winning, two-part play about the devastation of AIDS in Ronald Reagan's America during the 1980s. AIDS is still one of the worst pandemic diseases, considered one of "the big three" infectious diseases along with malaria and tuberculosis. In 2013, 2.1 million people became infected with AIDS. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 50 million people worldwide live with HIV in 2016.

My goal for this honors class has been to capture as many different human rights concerns as possible through the works of a variety of playwrights from different countries. Other approaches of this kind could also work well in an honors curriculum. For instance, one might focus on women's rights, in which case the reading list could include female playwrights such as Marina Carr, Patricia Burke-Brogan, Liz Lochhead, Griselda Gambaro, Ama Ata Aidoo, Lorraine Hansberry, Marsha Norman, Anna Deavere Smith, Suzan-Lori Parks, Ntozake Shange, Eve Ensler, Cherrie Moraga, Danai Gurira, and Caryl Churchill.

## WHY TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS IN HONORS

Human rights is a subject on the rise in the academic world. According to Sarita Cargas and Cece Shantzek, "with the growth of the human rights 'industry,' academia must realize its role in preparing human rights professionals" (2). Cargas also points out that the LEAP initiative (Liberal Education and America's Promise) of the Association of American Colleges and Universities "argues that teaching human rights is a 'high-impact educational practice' for all undergraduates" (Cargas 7). Over ten universities in North America offer a bachelor's degree in human rights: Columbia University, Barnard College, Southern Methodist University, Trinity College, University of Dayton, Webster University, Carleton University, St. Thomas University, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, University of Toronto, Wilfrid Laurier

University–Brantford, and York University. Many other universities offer a minor or concentration in human rights.

In addition, most North American universities offer courses on human rights theory, practice, and law through such departments as American Studies, Anthropology, Education, History, Honors, International Relations, Languages, Peace Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Religion, and Sociology.

Given this availability of human rights courses, an ongoing question for academics is whether human rights is a discipline unto itself or an interdisciplinary field of study. Joseph Wronka expresses the prominent tendency of American universities, which has been to “incorporate human rights into various disciplines” (123). Jerry A. Jacobs, in his insightful *In Defense of Disciplines*, defines a discipline as “a broadly accepted field of study that is institutionalized as a degree-granting department in a large number of colleges and universities” (27). With this definition in mind, Jacobs probably would not consider human rights a discipline, and Cargas would probably question this definition. She acknowledges a wide disparity in human rights courses because they are offered through many different departments, but she insists that human rights programs in U.S. universities suffer from “a lack of rigor or coherence” (1) because, even in the American colleges and universities that offer a BA in human rights, “there is not one [human rights] course common to them all” (13). Cargas explains her strong case for human rights as a separate discipline: “Human rights indicates something fairly specific. It has its own history, arguments, essential documents, and its own conversation in the journals, the scholarly books, and among the NGOs[;] . . . human rights fits all the criteria of being a discipline” (3), an argument that I find persuasive and that may well represent the future of human rights in academia, standardizing the field of study and also providing this emerging field with more recognition and legitimacy.

Honors programs are ideally suited to teaching human rights, thanks to their smaller, seminar-style, discussion-based classes. Given the wide array of human rights classes available in honors programs and colleges across the U.S, honors has been a leader in teaching human rights. Some of these classes include “Science, Social Justice and Activism” in the Arizona State University Barrett Honors College, “Inequalities in a Globalizing World” in the University of South Florida Honors College, “Social Justice and Health” in the University of Minnesota Honors Program, “Global Citizenship and Social Responsibility” in the Boise State Honors Program, “Understanding and Combating Human Trafficking” in the University of Washington Honors Program, and “Solutions to Human Rights Problems” in the University of New Mexico Honors College.

The *JNCHC* article, “Assessing Social Justice as a Learning Outcome in Honors,” by Naomi Yavneh Klos, Kendall Eskine, and Michael Pashkevich, illustrates how honors programs are emphasizing the significance of teaching human rights, rightly arguing that “questions of social justice and civic engagement are an increasing focus of attention in honors education” in order to help students “to understand social structures, the forces that govern them, and the possibilities for both inequity and social change” (53; 54). My Theatre and Human Rights class has certainly confirmed this assessment.

Similarly, I applaud Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd’s *JNCHC* article, which explains why human rights classes are vital for honors students. Shepherd and Shepherd astutely insist that we ask what impact honors classes have on our students’ “civic responsibility, including civic tolerance toward various marginalized minority groups” (88), a consideration that provocatively challenges honors students’ understanding of their world. Human rights courses offer what Klos, Eskine, and Pashkevich wisely suggest is critical in an honors education: providing “ongoing training in the historical understanding of justice, in the embrace of diverse cultures and traditions, and in the experience of others” (54). My honors class both includes and enlarges this historical background about social justice through an interdisciplinary approach, as we explore theatrical depictions of human rights violations.

## WHY INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING

According to Allen F. Repko’s *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, interdisciplinary studies is “a process of answering a question, solving a problem or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline and draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights to produce a more comprehensive understanding” (12). Repko focuses on the benefits of interdisciplinary teaching in *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, where he astutely insists that interdisciplinary classes promote “perspective taking and thinking critically about conflicting information on an issue or problem from multiple knowledge sources” (Repko, Szostak, and Buchberger xviii). Repko pinpoints one of the main advantages of interdisciplinary teaching: that it provides—I would add, even encourages—a more complete assessment of a problem.

As human rights is a growing subject in U.S. universities, so is interdisciplinary teaching. As Jacobs notes, “interdisciplinarity is everywhere—neuroscience, nanotechnology, bioengineering, behavioral economics, and the digital humanities—not to mention various racial, ethnic and gender studies



programs” (123). Robert J. Sternberg concurs with Jacobs in his article “Interdisciplinary Problem-Based Learning: An Alternative to Traditional Majors and Minors,” where he proposes that because our lives in the twenty-first century demand an interdisciplinary approach, so must our teaching. Proponents of interdisciplinary teaching contend that the wide array of problems we face around the world “aggressively cross boundaries that render the perspectives and methods of single disciplines incomplete and inefficacious” (Sternberg 123). Correspondingly, by integrating disciplines we give our students more information that they need to solve such multifaceted issues as human rights violations. Sternberg’s and Repko’s insistence on the value of interdisciplinary teaching specifically applies to my Theatre and Human Rights class as the problems our playwrights write about come directly from real, complex human rights abuses. I also propose that the “live” element of plays in performance allows the characters to actively brainstorm solutions to these problems in front of a live audience, in turn inspiring the audience to discuss solutions.

Interdisciplinary classes are a core part of most honors programs. For instance, all UNM honors classes give students “the opportunity to discover connections among disciplines” (UNM Honors College). My Theatre and Human Rights honors class includes the following disciplines:

1. **Fine Arts** (studying plays from the performance angle: discussing playwrights, directors, actors, choreographers, and designers as well as reading reviews of performances and watching live performances, taped stage versions, and films);
2. **History** (investigating the history of different countries we are studying as well as historical background on the human rights issues);
3. **Human Rights Theory** (learning about the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or UDHR);
4. **Biography** (examining playwrights’ lives and other work in detail);
5. **Economics and Political Theory** (exploring some of the most important economic systems in the twentieth century that have influenced our playwrights and their work, such as Communism and Socialism, and discussing human rights organizations’ aims).

The Association of American Colleges and Universities’ “Integrative Value Rubric” states that “developing students’ capacities for integrative learning is central to personal success, social responsibility, and civic engagement in today’s global society. Students face a rapidly changing and increasingly

connected world where integrative learning becomes not just a benefit . . . but a necessity.” As my honors class integrates disciplines to study human rights, students learn more about the issues, leading them to what Warren Prior succinctly calls understanding how “human rights represent the conditions that people need to flourish” (19). The plays my students read and watch depict people suffering under terrible conditions; interdisciplinary learning helps students see the reasons behind this suffering.

## **WHY THEATRE IS ONE OF THE BEST APPROACHES TO INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN HONORS**

Arguably the most public of all the arts, theatre has long provided a lively platform for discussion of social justice issues, from Aristophanes’ overt criticism of the Peloponnesian War in his outrageous Ancient Greek comedy *Lysistrata* to the Belarus Free Theater’s controversial *Trash Cuisine* (2015), which explores institutionalized killing.

Although *JNCHC* and *Honors in Practice* have published articles that explore the benefits of teaching theatre and human rights individually in honors, they have not included articles that explore the importance of interdisciplinary teaching of these disciplines. I share Margaret Franson’s view from her 2001 *JNCHC* article, “The Play’s the Thing’: Theater Arts and Liberal Learning,” which advocates the many benefits of including the performing arts in honors. Franson declares that the arts contain “inherent powers” to fulfill the National Collegiate Honors Council’s 2013 “Definition of Honors Education,” which states that honors “provides opportunities for measurably broader, deeper, and more complex learning-centered and learner-directed experiences” (Franson 21). As Franson wisely notes, performing arts honors classes can “deepen self-knowledge, to develop the virtues most useful in the pursuit of truth, to build community, to enhance appreciation for the ways in which texts of all kinds function to make meaning and evoke feeling” (21); these goals for student growth mirror those of many honors programs. For example, the UNM Honors College’s mission statement reflects a common thread in honors education: “to provide challenging opportunities for an intensive interdisciplinary and cross-cultural liberal education to highly motivated, talented and creative undergraduates in all majors and to build a community of scholars” (UNM Honors College).

Building on Franson's view of the importance of including the performing arts in honors education, I suggest that theatre is an ideal discipline to teach honors students about human rights because plays bring human rights concerns to a more personal level through poignant depictions of realistic characters, relationships, dialogue, and situations. If plays provide a stimulating ground for instigating a variety of conversations about human rights, it follows that combining disciplines—teaching about human rights through the theatre—is one of the best approaches in the honors classroom by providing a more thorough understanding of the intricate relationships between subjects.

To illustrate, when we discuss Maria Irene Fornes' play *Fefu and Her Friends* through an interdisciplinary lens, we contemplate the history of women's rights in the U.S. as well as how feminism has shaped Fornes' eight female characters. This often surreal play is set in 1935 and was written in 1977; my students approach it from their twenty-first-century perspective. Instead of learning about women's studies as a single discipline, our interdisciplinary approach of combining theatre with human rights allows us to consider the twentieth-century American feminist movement from a multitude of angles.

*Theatre and Human Rights* author Paul Rae states that human rights issues "inform some of the most widely staged and studied plays of the post-war period" (20), plays that constitute the majority of texts in my honors course. Rae further comments on theatre's ability to highlight human rights violations when he insists that theatrical performances give us a "means of holding our actions, ourselves and our societies up to scrutiny in light of human rights concerns" (22). Human rights scholar Alison Brysk concurs in her *Speaking Rights to Power: Constructing Political Will*: "The power of performance is an extension of the ability of narrative to raise consciousness of suffering, build empathetic bonds with its victims, and create understanding of its causes and consequences" (131). Walking in tandem with these scholars, my honors students quickly realize the agile platform theatre can provide for encouraging lively discussions of human rights. One student wrote in her final research paper that through this class, she had discovered how theatre is "an amazing ground for challenging human rights violations" because it "holds the audience witness to such crimes . . . while forcing the audience to hold some responsibility for these actions." She concluded that theatre was "the best place" to present an argument for human rights because the audience was not only captive but were capable of taking action to brainstorm responses to the human rights violations the plays presented.

## THE FOURTEEN PLAYS/HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Below is a table of the plays our honors class reads alongside the human rights issue(s) each play considers.

Play	Playwright	Country	Human Rights Issue(s)	Time Period of Play
<i>The Plough and the Stars</i>	Sean O'Casey	Ireland	War and Colonialism	1916
<i>Mother Courage and Her Children</i>	Bertolt Brecht	Europe, mainly Poland, Italy and Germany	War, specifically women in war	1618–1648
<i>Waiting for Godot</i>	Samuel Beckett	Post-World War II Europe	Aftermath of World War II	1953
<i>The Crucible</i>	Arthur Miller	United States	Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism	1692–1693
<i>The Freedom of the City</i>	Brian Friel	Northern Ireland	"The Troubles" in Northern Ireland	1973
<i>Fefu and Her Friends</i>	Maria Irene Fornes	United States	Women's Rights	1935
<i>Pantomime</i>	Derek Walcott	Trinidad and Tobago	Colonialism	1978
<i>Zoot Suit</i>	Luis Valdez	United States	Hispanic Civil Rights	1943
<i>"Master Harold" ... and the Boys</i>	Athol Fugard	South Africa	Apartheid	1950
<i>The Bus Stop</i>	Gao Xingjian	China	Communism	1983
<i>Miss Saigon</i>	Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil	Vietnam	Vietnam War	1975; 1978
<i>Fences</i>	August Wilson	United States	African-American Civil Rights	1957; 1965
<i>Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth</i>	Drew Hayden Taylor	Canada	Native Peoples of Canada	1996

<i>Angels in America</i> , Part One and Part Two, <i>Perestroika</i> and <i>Millennium Approaches</i>	Tony Kushner	United States	AIDS and GLBTQ+ Rights	1985–1990
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## DISCUSSING HUMAN RIGHTS IN “*MASTER HAROLD*” . . . *AND THE BOYS*, BY ATHOL FUGARD

On the surface, not much happens in this short play that lasts only an hour and a half without intermission. The scene is simple: a tea room during a rainy afternoon in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, in 1950. We meet three characters: Hally, the white, seventeen-year-old son of the owners of the tea room who has just returned home from school and two Black waiters, Sam and Willie, who mop the floor and clean the cafe while Hally discusses his day at school. We quickly see that Hally has a close friendship with Sam and Willie, and especially Sam.

“*Master Harold*” is a frank autobiography of Athol Fugard’s agonized growing up with an alcoholic, disabled father and his mother in South Africa in the 1950s; it is a reenactment of his complicated relationship with his good friend and mentor, Sam, the Fugard family’s Black employee; it is also a quiet, piercing reflection on the legacy of apartheid.

Our Theatre and Human Rights honors class approaches this gripping play through an interdisciplinary lens, using techniques from various disciplines.

### History

We explore the background on the overriding human rights issue, which is apartheid. Apartheid—which means “separateness” in Afrikaans, the language of the Dutch settlers who arrived in South Africa in 1652—was maintained as the racist regime from 1948 to 1993. During apartheid, South Africa’s ruling National Party, composed of the roughly 21% white minority, promoted a white supremacist Christian National State, using racial segregation to enforce its rule over the roughly 79% Black and “Colored” (meaning mixed race) majority.

South African segregation under apartheid involved all education; medical care and other public services; housing; voting rights; marriage laws and

birth rates; and sexual relations between Whites and Blacks/Coloreds. The government also strictly restricted women's rights. These constraints were enforced through numerous laws approved in the 1940s–1950s, which my honors students discuss in detail:

- A. **Pass Laws** (1948): the requirement that all Blacks and Coloreds carry a passbook.
- B. **Population Registration Act** (1950): the racial registration system that classified by color.
- C. **Group Areas Act** (1950): the rules determining where Black and Colored people could live and what property they could buy, also segregating races in all public places, including theatres. (Notably, having a Black and a White actor on stage during apartheid was illegal; Fugard's acting company disobeyed this law.)
- D. **Amendment to the Immorality Act** (1950): the prohibition of sexual relations between races.
- E. **Suppression of Communism Act** (1950): the government's right to ban suspected Communists without trial or appeal.
- F. **Bantu Education Act** (1953): the government's control of all South African schools.
- G. **Extension of University Act** (1959): the prohibition of admitting African students to all universities except with special permission by the government.

## Biography

We ponder the life of Nelson Mandela (1918–2013), exploring his experiences as an anti-apartheid activist who was imprisoned for twenty-seven years, followed by his presidency of South Africa from 1994 to 1999, his co-award of the Nobel Peace Prize with F. W. de Klerk in 1993, and his legacy following his death in 2013.

## Autobiography

We discuss the play from its devastating autobiographical level, with Fugard looking back on the most shameful episode of his childhood, which he recreates in the play.

## FINE ARTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

As we intersect the disciplines of fine arts and human rights, we begin by understanding why the South African government banned the play in both written and performance form, this play being one of several that our honors class reads that have been banned. We then consider the play from a performance angle, beginning with Fugard's decision to open the play outside of South Africa. We ponder its world premiere in 1982 in the United States at the Yale Repertory, followed by a successful transfer to Broadway that same year. We also discuss the 2003 Broadway revival and compare the play's initial critical and commercial success to its quieter reception in 2003. Our discussion of "*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys comes to life by watching scenes from a film version of the play. Seeing the plays come alive always makes a deep impression on my honors students. After my spring 2015 class watched the climactic scene from the 2010 "*Master Harold*" film, the entire class was speechless.

When we turn a detailed eye to what happens in the play, we consider Fugard's decision not to even mention apartheid. This absence is perhaps more powerful than hammering us with the term since it is still the play's most pervasive, dominant element. Fugard makes it clear that this underlying, legally mandated racism has kept Sam and Willie from obtaining any formal education, severely limited their housing options, and forced them into low-paying jobs with no opportunities for advancement. Likewise, apartheid will clearly enable Hally to rise above his Black friends and mentors simply because he is white.

As a member of the white ruling class, Hally represents the force of repression, which he gleefully acknowledges in the play's ugliest, climactic moments. Pushed to the brink of anger and embarrassment after learning that his alcoholic and disabled father is returning home from the hospital and grimly anticipating his father's pestering him for money to buy alcohol, Hally lashes out at Sam and Willie, caustically telling them his "favorite joke," which he shares with his father, about "a nigger's arse" not being "fair" (648). After this deplorable insult, and Sam's retaliation by dropping his pants so that Hally can "have a good look" at his "real Basuto arse," Hally spits in Sam's face (648). Fugard described this episode of spitting in Sam's face as the moment that "totally symbolized the ugliness, the potential ugliness waiting for me as a White South African" (qtd. in Durbach 509). After watching Hally's degrading behavior to his friends, honors students realize the rigid power structure that apartheid mandated as they link history, biography, autobiography, human rights, and fine arts in a seamless, potent thread.



## THE BENEFITS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING OF THEATRE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TO HONORS STUDENTS

On the last day of the fall 2015 semester, I asked my seventeen students to describe—anonynously—how the interdisciplinary nature of our honors class had influenced their understanding of how theatre and human rights interconnect, specifically in *“Master Harold” . . . and the Boys*. One student responded,

In *“Master Harold” . . . and the Boys*, the understanding of the human rights violations was crucial to the analysis of the play as a whole. It is the foundation on which the play is based and therefore plays a major role in the play itself. Without this understanding, I do not think I would be able to grasp the implications or intensity of the ideas expressed in the play.

Another student echoed this viewpoint, explaining,

Especially in *“Master Harold” . . . and the Boys*, it’s important to recognize the depth and complexity of the issues confronted in the play. It deals with racism, apartheid, hate, shame, growth and the delicacy of personal relationships. This play cannot be understood solely as a literary work or solely as historical commentary. It is a memoir; a powerful statement about hate; a work of art. It requires multiple angles and lenses to understand something as multifaceted and complex as a play dealing with human rights issues.

Perhaps what teaching Theatre and Human Rights in an interdisciplinary context has shown me, above all, is that honors students develop a deeper understanding of a topic when they feel emotionally connected to several disciplines. In the case of *“Master Harold,”* we learn about the history of apartheid through reading Fugard’s play, and then we watch it in painful action. As a result, the class feels empathy for Sam, Willie, and even Hally. As Kathy J. Cooke comments in “Cultivating Awareness in Honors: First-Person Noting and Contemplative Practices,” we need to be reminded of “how intertwined emotion and thinking can be” (198), which my students clearly demonstrated in their responses.

One student expressed the interconnection particularly well, saying that “plays give a more personal way to see human rights. . . . [This honors class] is not a ‘theory’ . . . you see how these human rights violations affect the



characters' lives." Our Theatre and Human Rights class is, in the words of David Brooks, an example of "using art to reteach people how to see." Thanks to the persuasive power of the theatre, exemplified in "*Master Harold*"... *and the Boys*, honors students' understanding of human rights can grow exponentially.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I remain deeply indebted to my colleague Sarita Cargas, Assistant Professor in the UNM Honors College, for many conversations about this article. She is unsurpassed in her knowledge of human rights, and she graciously provided vital suggestions and a detailed critique. I also thank my honors students for their eagerness to discuss this fascinating topic. Finally, I thank Ada Long and the two anonymous reviewers, whose probing comments have improved the depth of this article considerably.

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# **Critical Experiential Education in the Honors Classroom: Animals, Society, and Education**

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**P**arker Palmer and Arthur Zajonc, scholars of higher education, have described the purpose of higher education:

Our colleges and universities need to encourage, foster, and assist our students, faculty, and administrators in finding their own authentic way to an individual life where meaning and purpose are tightly interwoven with intellect and action, where compassion and care are infused with insight and knowledge. (56)

The role of higher education is not only to prepare students for a career: it should assist and support them as they begin an adult life, which includes contributing to society and a community, participating in a democracy, forming relationships, clarifying their values and beliefs, and finding meaning and direction in the world. However, as higher education becomes more tightly linked to job and career preparation in both the public imagination and the

actual practices of institutions, students are not surprisingly focused increasingly on credentialing (Arum and Roksa; Blum; Selingo, “College” and “There is Life”). Within honors classrooms and curricula, faculty have observed students becoming afraid of taking risks as they fear failure and “new challenges that might threaten their GPAs and hopes of medical or law school” (Wintrol and Jerinic 47). Yet, as Folds-Bennett and Twomey remind us, Palmer and Zajonc’s beliefs about the larger purpose of higher education are particularly important in an honors education, which is concerned in part, as they write, with “providing experiences through which students deeply engage ideas and content so that both their analytical abilities and core beliefs and values are transformed” (85).

One approach to addressing the challenge posed by Palmer and Zajonc is the pedagogical philosophy of “engaged learning.” As Folds-Bennett and Twomey discuss, engaged learning builds on Kolb’s influential 1984 work in experiential education, emphasizing the centrality of concrete experience combined with conceptualization, reflection, and experimentation. In practice, engaged learning encompasses many approaches, including service-learning, community-based research and engagement (Camp), and the incorporation of experiential education into classroom-based courses. Engaged (or active) learning has a long history in honors education (e.g., Braid and Long; Machonis; Long), particularly the well-known honors approach called *City as Text*<sup>™</sup>, which explores and analyzes the space and place of a city as a text for authentic experience: learning, writing, and understanding the power of seeing oneself as an agent of change (Long). Given the challenges inherent in today’s honors classrooms, we need honors pedagogies that continue in this tradition of seeing honors classrooms as dynamic learning places that promote and encourage authentic engagement, not solely credentialing for graduate school and future careers. I offer as one form of engaging learning—critical experiential education—the pedagogical philosophy for an honors seminar I taught in the fall of 2015, *Animals, Society, and Education*.

As an education professor with many years of experience working in student affairs, I understand and value experiential education. I regularly use both reflection on prior experience and other forms of engaged learning, e.g., service-learning, in my courses (Dolby, “Rethinking” and “Developing”). As I designed *Animals, Society, and Education*, I recognized that in order for students to actually learn about animals, experiential education needed to be woven into the course assignments on a regular basis; reading, writing, discussion, and films were not enough. Animals, after all, are a constant

part of the human experience: dogs and cats are treasured members of our families while other animals appear on our plates at breakfast, lunch, and dinner (Herzog). We watch animals for entertainment at circuses and dissect them in high school biology classes (Dawn; Hart, Wood, & Hart; Solot & Arluke). Animals even turn up in places that we would never expect to find them: for example, bits of cow are in hundreds, if not thousands, of everyday items in our homes, including paint, toothpaste, and tires (Hayes & Hayes). Despite animals' presence in our lives every day, we generally spend very little time thinking about our relationship with them, reflecting on what we have learned about them, or trying to see the world from the perspective of a bee, a pig, or a horse.

Each individual's personal experience with animals is significant, and I brought my own experience into the design and teaching of the class. In addition to having four cats at home, I had been a volunteer at our local animal shelter for eight years by August 2015, when I began to teach the honors seminar, and I had spent thousands of hours immersed in the everyday worlds of animals. These experiences helped me to shape the two related pedagogical components from *Animals, Society, and Education* that are grounded in an experiential education philosophy: the use of reflection to understand how students made sense of their relationships with animals and an assignment I specifically designed for the class called "A Day in the Life of an Animal." Although the class included other experiential education components, such as a visit with two vendors at the campus farmers' market and role-playing activities that allowed students to act out multiple worldviews different from their own, the pedagogical value of reflection and of the specific assignment might be of greatest value to honors teachers who are considering such a course.

## **ANIMALS, SOCIETY, AND EDUCATION: AN HONORS SEMINAR**

At my home institution, Purdue University, faculty who wish to teach interdisciplinary honors seminars submit proposals to a subcommittee of the honors college, who review the proposals and make recommendations to the honors college. These seminars, which are designated "HONR," are specifically designed to be interdisciplinary and thus are significantly different from honors courses that are located within particular departments on campus. When I proposed *Animals, Society, and Education* in the fall of 2014, I described the purpose of the course in the syllabus "to examine the

relationship among animals, society, and education. We will examine how humans are socialized to understand their relationship to different species and types of animals through formal and non-formal education, and the different roles and purposes of animals in society.” The course started by investigating and analyzing the different roles of animals in human society (e.g., pets, food, pests, and entertainment) and in education, then moving on to discuss current scientific advances in the areas of animal sentience, cognition, and emotion; the paradigms of animal welfare and animal rights; and the changing status of animals in society. The course drew from the fields of education, veterinary medicine, sociology, animal science, and political science, among others (the course syllabus is available from the author or at <https://www.animalsandsociety.org/dolby-animals-society-and-education/>).

Nine students enrolled in the class, which I taught during the fall semester of 2015. Students ranged from first-year to senior and represented the colleges of liberal arts, agriculture, science, and pharmacy (no education students enrolled). All of the students were women: two were African-American, two were Asian-American, and five were white.

I submitted an application to my institution’s human subjects review board (IRB) to use student writing and presentations (including in-class free writing, posts on the Blackboard Learning system, and all submitted presentations and papers) in published research. The study was designated as exempt in May 2015. The student writing was analyzed using what Hatch refers to as an “inductive” approach to qualitative analysis, in which the categories and themes emerge from the data instead of following narrowly structured pre-existing research questions (161–79). In this research, I was generally interested in understanding how the pedagogical approach I used in designing and teaching the class shaped students’ learning; the specific analysis of the student writing emerged from the data as I read, reflected, and developed a coding scheme. My research focused on two types of excerpts from student writing: (1) written work submitted for a grade in the course, for which I use pseudonyms to protect student identity, and (2) excerpts from students’ “blue books,” which allow students to provide anonymous, weekly feedback to me. I distributed the blue books at the beginning of the semester, and each student created a symbol for her book that only she would recognize. Once a week, for about five minutes at the end of class, students had unstructured, free writing time in their blue books. I responded to each student and thus had a dialogue with her throughout the semester that was both anonymous and outside of the grading structure, so these comments are not attributable to particular students.



Because of the small number of students enrolled in the course, I am unable to draw conclusions about specific demographic groups (college/major, race/ethnicity); instead I focus attention on the learning outcomes of the students as a whole. However, the diversity of student majors was a strength of the course, and students' final projects often reflected their career interests; for example, a student in animal science completed a final project on welfare issues in the cattle industry while a student interested in a small-animal track in veterinary school researched the effects of companion animals on human health.

## EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Roberts makes an important distinction between “experiential learning” and “experiential education.” Experiential learning (or what he terms “learning by doing”), as he describes it, “can be seen as a *method* or *technique* that any teacher might employ to meet certain instructional objectives” (4). Although Roberts discusses the merits of experiential learning as an instructional technique, he says that experiential education goes beyond the application of a method within a classroom context and is instead a philosophical approach to pedagogy. Within this larger framework, Roberts identifies four predominant strands (or, as he call them, “currents”): romantic, pragmatist, critical, and normative.

Drawing on the intellectual legacies of Western scholars such as Rousseau, Whitman, and Thoreau, the romantic current focuses on autonomous individual learning through direct, transcendent experience, generally in an outdoors/nature or wilderness environment. An underlying assumption of this strand is that such experience alone will be enough to stimulate educational possibilities: for example, that simply hiking up a mountain or fording a river is educational in and of itself. In contrast to the romantic current, Roberts's pragmatist current is rooted in Dewey's philosophical orientation to the notion of “experience.” Here experience is not individual but instead based in a community and social ethos that is always oriented toward a larger project of democracy. The pragmatist current of experience is not assumed to be automatically educative; instead, it must be linked to and situated within a larger theoretical framework to have meaning. In Roberts's third strand, the critical current, he writes that “we might examine how power influences and dictates interactions and decision-making” (69). Concerned with social justice, the critical current is grounded in the intellectual history of the Frankfurt

School and in critical education scholars such as Freire and Giroux, centering the individual as the locus and active agent of change. In the fourth and final strand, the normative, experience becomes a market-driven product that is packaged and delivered to a consumer. For example, as Roberts discusses, companies might send employees on ropes courses to promote teamwork and collaboration, and high schools might require service-learning experiences for students without broader conceptualization of or reflection on its purpose. Roberts is particularly concerned about this increasingly common approach to experiential education because it is hyper-focused on consumption—of experience, in this case—with any broader educational purpose subsumed by market forces.

Using Roberts's mapping of the field, I situate my approach to experiential education in *Animals, Society, and Education* largely within the critical current. While Roberts's discussion of the critical current focuses solely on human relationships of power and dynamics of social justice, I expand that strand to include human relationships with animals. The course very specifically asks students to use their past experience through reflection and their present experience through course assignments to re-imagine and re-think both their personal relationships with animals and the assumptions that undergird the larger society's understandings of animals and the human-animal relationship.

## **CRITICAL REFLECTION AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN ANIMALS, SOCIETY, AND EDUCATION**

Animals are with us everywhere, including on our campuses: in laboratories, in the dining halls on our plates, occasionally in the residence halls as service or support animals, and buzzing around our heads as we walk from building to building (Dolby, "Animal Research"). Trying to incorporate structured experiences with animals into a classroom-based course is nevertheless difficult. I used two approaches, reflection and experiential education, to access our experiences with animals as rich sources of data for us to discuss and analyze together. First, very early in the semester, students wrote an essay in which they reflected on their own upbringing and socialization toward animals. Second, I designed an experiential education assignment, "A Day in the Life of an Animal," that required students to apply what they had learned in class about animal cognition and emotion by spending a minimum of four hours alone with an animal of their choice and then preparing an oral presentation, through the eyes of that individual animal, to share with the class.

## Critical Reflection

In the first written assignment for the course, “What I Have Learned about Animals,” students reflected on what they had learned to this point in their life about animals, animals’ varied relationships with humans, and animals’ place in human society. As this was an elective course, many of the students who chose to enroll had already started to think about the role of animals in their lives and were able to identify the major forces of socialization that had shaped their perspectives. For example, Emily wrote,

A big influence on my love of animals was definitely my parents. My mother and father are two very big-hearted people who have giant soft spots when it comes to animals. In our family, a pet is not a pet, but an undeniable member of the family. Our pets have always been loved enormously up until the end and when an animal in our house passes away, their loss is greatly mourned and their presence is never forgotten.

In sharp contrast, another student in the class, Morgan, grew up in a family with very different attitudes towards animals,

I did not grow up in a household where pets were considered family. My mom found them to be messy, stinky, and a huge responsibility. Her love of animals came from her collection of fur coats she would purchase. Animals being considered part of the family didn’t occur to me until I entered other people’s homes.

A third student, June, reflected that her perspective about animals growing up was largely shaped through media representations. She wrote,

After watching the movie *Jaws*, sharks became the top of my most terrified animals list. When I went surfing in Hawaii, I was generally petrified that I would be attacked by a shark. . . . Frankly, my fear is irrational because the chances of being attacked by a shark are way less than getting into a driving accident.

Students also expressed conflicted feelings and emotions about animals raised and used for food, a theme that would be explored in-depth throughout the course. Elizabeth, who was raised in a small farming community, wrote,

Though I did not grow up on a farm, I was raised in a very rural community, and many of my friends were raised on farms. Because of

this, I have always viewed production animals, like cattle and swine, as animals that are meant for showing in 4-H and then being taken to slaughter or used for some other purpose like milking. I know what happens when animals are slaughtered and have always accepted that as okay because of how I was raised and the way my community felt and acted about the situation. In one of my high school agriculture classes, we watched several videos of animals being slaughtered and we had discussions about the topic. My teacher and classmates acted very unemotional about the process so I quickly became the same way. Overall, my feelings are very indifferent as long as the animals are being treated fairly in the process. I start to have stronger feelings for production animals when I hear of deficient slaughtering practices and animals treated inhumanely.

Nicole wrote about her mixed feelings about cooking and eating lobsters,

I also grew up eating seafood on the East Coast. In Connecticut, we bought our lobsters live from the docks, took them home and boiled them. I always hated being a part of the actual killing of the lobster (I even researched the most humane way to do so), but loved being a part of the eating of the lobster. Boiling lobster is the only experience I have “killing” my own food, and I would say it was a fairly negative experience.

Finally, Hannah began to understand through the assignment that she had been socialized to see animals through particular lenses and welcomed the opportunity to explore human-animal interactions in more depth. She wrote,

For the most part, my interactions with animals have been commonplace, deeply rooted by the norms of society. Some wrong actions may have excuses, but it doesn't excuse them from being wrong. So now that I'm becoming more aware of my true interactions with animals, I am on the path of choosing which of my best friends to side with. Does human superiority reign or not? With an open mind to Animals, Society and Education, I hope to figure that out.

Reflection on current issues of animal welfare and animal rights were regularly a part of class discussion. For example, in Indiana as in much of the Midwest, late summer is the time for county fairs; animals are on display as part of 4-H projects, available as food to eat, and used for entertainment. As

the course started that month, our first class-based activity was watching a short video about a popular activity at state fairs: pig wrestling. In the months prior to the class, pig wrestling at county fairs had received significant local and regional media coverage as public concern grew about animal welfare and humane treatment of pigs. Our course began with probing this activity that many students had experienced or watched—maybe even the previous week. Reflecting later on that first video and the discussion that followed, Emily wrote,

[W]e could look at hog wrestling. If you just saw them doing it, you may look at it and think it is a tradition, it is what they have always done and they know what they are doing. But, if you put a dog in a pig's place, what would the reaction be? Probably disgust and rage, and everyone would want the animal out. This gives another perspective when analyzing, because if we look at the dog this way, how can we allow the pig to go through the same thing?

The focus of the conversation about pig wrestling was not to decide whether it was right or wrong but instead to raise critical issues that we could explore as a class throughout the semester, whether specific questions about pigs or general questions that could be applied to multiple animals. We generated several important questions during that discussion: What is the cognitive complexity of a pig? Why is pig wrestling considered entertainment? What is the pig experiencing? What is the human experiencing? What is the point/goal/benefit for the pig and the human? What is the psychological trauma to the pig? Does it matter if the pig is harmed if we are just going to kill it for food later? What are we teaching children about their relationship with animals?

In a similar manner, the course focused on moving students beyond binaries and either/or thinking to examine issues from multiple perspectives. For example, many students came into the class thinking dualistically about eating meat, believing that you were either a meat eater or a vegetarian. In class, however, we examined food choices through a more complex and critical approach, discussing the conflicting values and decisions inherent in being a vegetarian, vegan, or conscious omnivore. Reflecting on this pedagogical approach, Samantha wrote,

A new way of thinking that I've learned from our discussions and readings is that everything is not always binary, and there can be many more ways than just two ways to look at a certain issue. . . . I've learned to be more open-minded and reflective about things that I've

never even considered before. For example, the dichotomy of food consumption is not simply you're a vegetarian or you eat meat.

Amanda was able to also move beyond dichotomous thinking and connect the animal welfare issues addressed in the class to human issues of inequality and discrimination,

[I]t's good to look at a topic from more than the binary positions. For example, meat eating tends to be polarized to meat eating vs. ethical veganism, but that misses a lot of important points outside the debate. I think Herzog demonstrated that very well by comparing cockfighting and broiler hens. Do we pretend we care about animal welfare when we regulate cock fighting, or are we more motivated by racism, war-on-drugs, illegal gambling? We don't stringently regulate horse racing, a rich, white people activity, despite its cruelty.

The course also used videos to foster critical conversations about other animal welfare and rights-related issues such as cat declawing, the captivity of marine mammals, puppy mills, and fur farms. While it is clearly impossible to provide students with experiences in all of these areas, reflection on past and present relationships with animals allowed students to bring their experiences into the classroom and to consider the wide range of ways that humans use animals in contemporary life.

### **Critical Experiential Education: "A Day in the Life of an Animal"**

The central experiential education assignment for this course, "A Day in the Life of an Animal," asked students to spend four hours alone with an animal who is not their own pet and to try to understand what it is like to live life as that animal. In preparation for the assignment, students read widely in the fields of animal cognition and emotion. During the weeks directly before students were to complete their experiential assignment, we focused on readings about the field of cognitive ethology, which uses naturalistic, humane, observational methods to study animals' lives (Bekoff). In contrast to earlier modes of animal study that attributed animal behavior primarily to instinct, cognitive ethology assumes that animals have intellect, make purposeful decisions, and form emotional bonds and attachments. The class had already spent many weeks discussing the new research in animal cognition and emotion, so students were familiar with these concepts. For example,

we discussed the emotional and intellectual worlds of dogs, cats, birds, fish, primates, and pigs.

Through the readings on cognitive ethology, students began to understand that the project asked them to conduct fieldwork much in the way a scientist would. For example, Samantha wrote,

After reading through chapter 2 [of Bekoff], I realized that our “Day in the Life of an Animal” project is pretty much small scale cognitive ethology fieldwork. I have been trying to figure out how to approach the project, and now I have a better/clearer idea. . . . I thought of the project in a different way, and I realized that as I’m spending time with the hedgehog and observing his behavior, I have to try harder to see the world from his point of view based off of the patterns of behavior he uses in varying situations. I have to try to decipher his emotions, beliefs, thought processes, and self-awareness in a more hedgehog-centric way.

Similarly, Hannah reflected,

One of the barriers I’ve come across since enrolling in this class was connecting to animals. It has been a challenge to take on their perspective when throughout my life, I’ve focused on the physical aspects that make us different. However, Bekoff’s analysis of animal happiness, deceit and more are feelings I myself have experienced. The fact that foxes bury the dead and grieve similarly to humans gives me proof that our ways of thinking may not be so different. Believing in the complex nature of animals is key to the Day in the Life project. It would be wrong to attribute every animal’s action to instinct. Rather, I’ve learned to analyze their behaviors on a higher level and closer to that of humans.

After completing the assignment, students prepared a short (12–15 minutes, including discussion) presentation from the point of view of the animal. Students were asked to describe the daily life of the animal: what he or she does, likes, and dislikes; his or her personality, how “smart” she or he is and in what ways; and what makes that animal a unique individual. Presentations included photographs, videos, and audio recordings, all to explain to the class what life is like as that animal. Animals that students learned about included traditional pets (such as dogs, cats, and rabbits), non-traditional pets (a goat, a hedgehog), and a cat living in a local animal shelter while awaiting adoption.



Many students went well beyond the minimum expectations for the project. For example, the student who studied the hedgehog stayed overnight in her friend's apartment so that she could sleep in the same room as the hedgehog and be there when he was at his most active and alert. Another student, who studied a friend's cat, made a clear effort to see the world from the exact same perspective as the cat, trying to look out the window with her and follow her movements throughout the four hours.

As a student anonymously reflected in her blue book about cognitive ethology and the "Day in the Life of an Animal" project,

Cognitive ethology is an interesting subject that I will take into consideration for the rest of my life whenever thinking about animals. I think that now maybe I'll even (subconsciously or consciously) try to study all of the animals in my life to see if I can observe greater depths of emotions, perceptions, and self-awareness in them. Cognitive ethology and all of the stories have definitely changed my perception of animals.

While "A Day in the Life of an Animal" was the central, planned, experiential component of this course, we also visited the campus farmers market during one class, met with two of the farmers there, and had the opportunity to ask them questions about their relationships with the animals that they raised and ultimately slaughtered for food. I also regularly incorporated debates and other activity-based exercises into the class and encouraged students to do final projects that involved actively talking to and interviewing people, not solely library-based projects. For example, one student, who did her project on organic farming, spent time at local farms. Another student, who was interested in the health issues and concerns surrounding genetically modified organisms, spent several hours talking with a local farmer who has background and training in the medical professions. Thus, in multiple ways, the structure of the course encouraged students to have experiences and conversations that immersed them in the real lives of both humans and animals.

## **LEARNING FROM CRITICAL REFLECTION AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION: RAISING NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT ANIMALS AND HUMANS**

Critical experiential education, as Roberts discusses, situates the individual as an agent of change. Significantly, however, the desired change is



not solely at the individual level but instead connects the individual to larger societal structures and inequities, grounded in Freire's theory of praxis. As a whole, the course asked students to examine their relationships with animals, apply their new knowledge and insights to reshaping their individual choices, and then understand how those choices are intertwined with broader societal issues concerning humans' relationships with animals.

Many students began to examine and explore critical perspectives by discussing course activities and readings with friends and family and to examine their own choices regarding their relationships with animals. One student wrote in her blue book, "Because of this class, my roommate and I had an hour-long conversation about chickens." Another student reflected, "This class and the books we read are allowing me to have so many interesting conversations with people. Reading about [Hurricane] Katrina [and its impact on animals] really opened my eyes—I had no idea all of that was going on." A third student was particularly enthusiastic about the class field trip to the campus farmers market. She wrote,

This class is one of the highlights of my week! I had a whole conversation with my family about the truth of the whole 'organic/free-range' thing. . . . Going to the farmer's market was a really refreshing way to learn. All parts of this class are refreshing, but that was especially cool!

After watching and discussing a film about the cruelty of cat declawing (*The Paw Project*), one student discussed her family's decision to declaw their cat many years ago:

In terms of the Paw Project/declawing, it made me really sick to think about how my last cat was declawed. She had some biting issues and towards the end of her life was urinating all over the place. Looking back I hate to see that we caused her that pain, and I wish more people knew what I just learned.

Two students, Hannah and Nicole, wrote about being able to apply a new, critical way of looking at the relationship between humans and animals. Hannah wrote,

Prior to this class, while reading the course title "Animals, Society, and Education," I never consciously registered that I actually am an animal. Though it makes sense biologically, our American culture generally doesn't acknowledge this and creates a rift between

humans and non-human animals, the former often characterized as a superior, dominant species. . . . I now find it important to consider the animal kingdom a complex continuum rather than a pyramid with humans on top.

Nicole was particularly affected by watching the film *Blackfish*, about orca captivity at Seaworld:

This class has taught me to look at things from the animal's point of view. We live in a culture that is very human-based, humans above all, the human race rules all other races. When we watched *Blackfish*, I got to see the emotional damage inflicted on a whale when her baby was taken away.

## USING CRITICAL EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN THE HONORS CLASSROOM

Susan Blum, in her anthropological study of why college students love to learn and hate school, draws a contrast between what she terms “learning in school” and learning “in the wild” (211): “learning in school” is a conventional, content-based approach to education that includes lectures, an emphasis on grades and tests, and extrinsic motivation; learning “in the wild” is active, involved, real, and grounded in intrinsic motivation. Critical experiential education attempts to bridge the gap between the two kinds of learning by bringing some of the real-world education of the wild into a classroom setting. In the context of critical experiential education, my class prompted students to apply what they had learned to creating changes in the way that humans interact with animals. On an individual level, many students began to understand that the ability to make changes for animals was one of the most important lessons of the class. Hannah understood that she needed to ask more critical questions and seek out additional information instead of simply believing everything she was told:

I realized that I had just been going along with what everyone else told me, not actually seeking out the facts for myself. This is because I would much rather be in the dark regarding difficult issues such as this one [farm animal welfare] than find out the horrible truths. Still, I need to take it upon myself to actually find the information that is true, rather than rely on what companies or lay people tell me.

That way, I can make decisions based on fact, not distorted truth or opinion.

Samantha directly connected what she was learning in the course to her ability to make change in the world:

Is the purpose of this class to come to a greater understanding about the relationships we have with animals or is there another overarching goal to reach? I'd like there to be some sort of change that comes out of it, instead of me getting upset over animal cruelty/animal rights and all the things I'm learning about but then not really doing anything about it. Maybe the point is that the change has to come from my own introspection and subsequent decision to actively do something?

Students were also encouraged to understand that they could come together, as a class, to share what they had learned with other people in order to contribute to the process of making changes in the lives of animals. At the end of the semester, students collaborated on a final class project, creating a handout with suggested practices that would assist animals and heighten human consciousness about human-animal relationships. The handout, which was distributed at end-of-semester presentations that were open to friends and colleagues, provided students the opportunity to understand that all of the “wild” experiential learning that they had done in the course could immediately be applied to their lives—as quickly as the next time they had a meal. Some of the suggestions the students proposed included: Don't eat meat from factory farms. If you don't know the source, don't eat it. Don't buy beauty products that are tested on animals. Don't support the use of captive animals as entertainment. Educate yourself and others about the benefit for the environment by adopting a conscious omnivore/vegetarian or vegan diet. This holiday season, ask friends and family for donations or gifts to shelters instead of personal presents.

While the class was specifically focused on animal-human relationships, many students also made the connection to ending discriminatory practices among humans such as racism. They thus included these suggestions: Learn more about other cultures you are not familiar with or do not understand. Ask questions, and LISTEN to the answers. Become an advocate and ally for people of color.

Blum and Palmer and Zajonc, among many other scholars, argue that institutions of higher education need to refocus on learning instead of schooling,

recommitting to intrinsically motivated education that is less focused on the process of credentialing and more concerned with learning for life and a sustainable future for the planet. Such concerns echo through the literature on honors education as honors students have proven themselves to be particularly adept at “doing school” (Pope) and are often uninterested in taking the types of risks that can lead to meaningful learning (Wintrol & Jerenic).

At core, critical experiential education asks that we teach and learn not only to understand the world but to transform it: that we constantly strive to make the world a more humane and just place. Historically, honors education has contributed to this process of social change through engaged learning approaches that allow students to see themselves as people who can create new ideas and possibilities, and our responsibility as honors teachers and administrators is to support our students in pushing beyond the objectives of getting A’s in order to take risks. In taking those risks in *Animals, Society, and Education*, students were able to reflect on the larger context of the class and the meaning of higher education in relationship to finding purpose, awareness, and direction in life, seeing themselves as people who are willing to grow through new and challenging experiences and who are able to contribute and create new possibilities in the world.

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# **Got Privilege?**

## **An Honors Capstone Activity on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

**I**n May 2013, Patrick was a participant in a multiday workshop sponsored by our university's Diversity Action Council. The goal of the workshop, led by off-campus experts commissioned by the university, was to help educate faculty and staff on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to foster conversations on these topics among these members of the university community. The workshop had several positive outcomes, which included facilitating faculty/staff interactions and fostering a sense of university-wide community as participants worked together to explore identity, intersectionality, and other issues related to diversity in the academic setting. Most importantly, the workshop served as the genesis for a class activity that was piloted in the fall 2013 semester.

In that term, Patrick, director of our university's honors program, was to teach an honors section of a course titled "Cultivating Global Citizenship," the primary aim of which was to equip students with ethical tools they would need as informed and engaged citizens in an increasingly global and multicultural society. Students in the course would read, discuss, and reflect upon texts by authors such as Kwame Anthony Appiah, Mindy Thompson Fullilove, bell hooks, and Jonathan Kozol. Their conversations with one another would help them explore others' ethical and moral principles even as they worked at developing their own and applying them to today's broad societal issues.

With the May workshop fresh in mind, Patrick decided he would task the students in the course with designing and delivering a workshop of their own, focusing on the same topics as the workshop in which he had recently participated. He saw several potential benefits to the activity:

1. It would challenge the students to put into practice many of the ideas they had discussed in the abstract during the semester.
2. It would offer the students an authentic audience comprising fellow students, university faculty and staff, and stakeholders in the broader community, including leaders of the class's service-learning partners.
3. It would empower the students to create and sustain ongoing conversations on diversity, equity, and inclusion with members of various communities.
4. It would acknowledge the students' agency, asking them to position themselves as leaders and experts in their respective disciplines rather than passive objects on which social forces act.

In December of 2013, the students in that semester's iteration of the course hosted the first of these student-led workshops, attended by roughly twenty students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. For two and a half hours, participants led consciousness-raising exercises and discussions on sensitive issues related to race, religion, gender, and sexuality.

Since that first workshop, eight more honors sections of the course have been taught (five by Patrick and three by Reid), and the students in each of these sections have been required to construct and facilitate a similar workshop with similar goals, each differing from the others depending on the individual interests and expertise of the students in each section. Despite their differences, each workshop has been well-received by participants, and



each group of students has reported considerable gains from taking part in the activity.

We are confident that the workshop activity is a portable one that can be implemented on other campuses with appropriate modification to accommodate local needs. To that end, we provide a brief overview of the literature on practices designed to improve students' understanding of diversity issues; a description of the activity and its logistical details; an examination of the students' reactions; and future plans for the activity on our campus. We are confident that the activity is worth replicating elsewhere, and, given the leadership roles our honors students are likely to play as they graduate from our programs, we recommend the activity as an opportunity for them to practice authentically engaged citizenship.

## **DIVERSITY EDUCATION: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T**

Diversity, inclusion, and equity are all terms requiring what social theorists call "thick descriptions." Although the terms may be in common use, their exact meanings are nuanced and variable from one person to another and from one discourse community to another. Indeed, given scholars' disagreement on definitions for, and interactions among, these and other related ideas (see, for instance, Berrey; Gerteis, Hartmann, and Edgell; Randolph; and Roberson), it is no wonder that students have a hard time coming to grips with them. Students at predominantly white institutions may have an especially hard time with the concept of diversity; white students' limited interaction with members of nonwhite communities may hinder their ability both to engage authentically with racial and ethnic diversity and to understand the perspectives of their nonwhite counterparts. Our own students have described isolation from people of color resulting from home schooling experiences, racially segregated schools, or simply living in the *de facto* segregation of contemporary U.S. society.

The literature on diversity education describes a wide variety of means to help students gain a better understanding of diversity-related issues. From diversity-intensive courses with multicultural themes to service-learning opportunities, various intervention strategies offer students a way to engage with diversity-related issues, often challenging them to critically examine their own racial identities, confront their own biases and prejudices, and learn from and with others different from themselves. Overall, the efficacy of such

strategies is unclear, given the fact that many studies focus on a single institution or, more narrowly still, on a single course or activity, severely limiting the studies' generalizability. Many studies of diversity education strategies are largely anecdotal, offering descriptions of activities with little formal analysis of their effectiveness, and yet other studies suggest that such strategies offer little, if any, effectiveness at improving understanding of diversity.

Among the studies that do assert the effectiveness of diversity-related workshops, Pascarella et al. claim that "participation in a racial or cultural awareness workshop . . . had significant net positive effects on openness to diversity/challenge" by the end of a student's first year of college (185). A few years later in 2001, a similar study by Whitt et al., in which Pascarella was a co-researcher, showed similar effects on second- and third-year students, with the authors noting that "such workshops cannot come 'too late' in a student's college career and that, whether previous experiences were negative or positive, subsequent workshops can have a positive effect" (191–92). A study performed on students at the University of Michigan in 2002 demonstrated gains in various learning outcomes, including "active thinking," "intellectual engagement and motivation," and "academic skills" (Gurin et al. 347). These gains were seen in all students engaging in "diversity experiences." For white students "the largest effects came from campus-facilitated diversity activities, namely classroom diversity and multicultural events, and inter-group dialogues held on campus" (352). White students also saw consistent gains in various "democracy outcomes," including "compatibility of difference and democracy," "perspective-taking," and "racial/cultural engagement" (347); students of other races saw less consistent gains (353).

Perhaps the most comprehensive overview of educational strategies is offered by Engberg, whose 2004 meta-analysis gives not only a taxonomy of these strategies but also a careful review of their effectiveness as reported in fifty studies. Engberg distinguishes four categories of intervention strategies, namely "multicultural course interventions," "diversity workshop and training interventions," "peer-facilitated interventions," and "service interventions" (481). He considers each category in turn, further classifying the studies falling under a given category depending on whether the studies employ quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods in their analysis. Overall, Engberg notes that while most studies suggest the positive effects of diversity-related programming at reducing racial bias, "in the majority of cases [of intervention studies], their limitations cast doubt on the evidentiary weight of the findings" (502). Indeed, scholarship on service learning, for example, suggests that this

particular high-impact practice, if not properly structured and reflected upon, can reinforce students' stereotypes (see Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill; Borden; and Butin for further discussion of this phenomenon).

Our activity at the University of North Carolina (UNC) Asheville is notable in that, when considered in conjunction with the service-learning-designated course which it culminates, it exemplifies all four of the categories of intervention Engberg articulates. Furthermore, in the way that the workshop activity offers a bridge between the students' engagement with diversity issues in class and the involvement of members of the broader university community, it echoes the pedagogical strategies employed by Pence and Fields, whose senior sociology majors deliver the results of their ethnographic research in the community to students in introductory sociology courses.

## THE WORKSHOP ACTIVITY

Though the workshop itself does not take place until the last class meeting of the semester, preparation takes place throughout the term. We notify the students of the workshop's assignment on the first day of class. Though little time is directly devoted to the assignment during the first half of the term, we encourage students to take note of topics, concepts, and examples they encounter in readings and discussions that may later prove helpful in designing their workshop.

Roughly halfway through the semester, the students begin to plan the workshop more intentionally. Around this time, we typically devote one class period to preparation, granting the students that period to lay out a rough schedule for the workshop, form subcommittees charged with specific tasks, and brainstorm an initial list of invitees. Our goals for the class in this initial session are to develop a statement of purpose for the workshop, to begin to think about its structure, and to assign the various roles necessary to complete the work. We have found that allowing students to have the space to explore this planning without the instructor present can free them to be more creative and potentially more critical. For instance, a recent class decided, in response to our university's garnering first place in the 2016 list of "Impact Schools" published by *The Princeton Review*, to challenge the true extent of the institution's impact, suggesting practices that might improve our school's positive influence on its community. Had the instructor, as a perceived proxy of the university, been present for this initial conversation, the class would probably have been hesitant to challenge the institution in this way.

After the initial planning, a good deal of work is done on the workshop outside of class as the various subcommittees prepare their individual workshop components on their own time. In the meantime, we assist the students in reaching out to the communities they wish to invite. We encourage the students to carefully think through whom they want to invite as a way of thinking about what they want to do. Many of the invited participants are change agents on campus or in the wider community, so the workshop really is an assembly of creative resources, with the participants being the greatest of these.

Roughly a week from the end of the semester, we devote another class period to the assignment, granting students the chance to develop materials for their workshop components, run through their workshop activities with one another, work with their instructors to troubleshoot potential difficulties, and get feedback from one another on their work. This meeting serves as a check on the programming the students have planned, addressing key questions:

- Does it address diversity, equity, and inclusion in meaningful and appropriate ways?
- Is it accessible to the audience the students have invited to take part?
- Is it logistically feasible, given the workshop's time constraints?
- Does it take into consideration the needs of the audience in, for instance, the variety of the presentations?
- Given the schedule, will the audience be hungry and need or want food?

In his most recent section of the course, Reid allowed the students yet more class time for planning, granting the students roughly one class per week for the last few weeks of the semester. The class schedule of three weekly meetings and a slightly lightened reading list made more frequent planning sessions possible.

Students may elect to meet with the instructors outside of class once or twice more as we help them further refine their programming. We cannot stress enough the value of a “dry run.” Often students think they know what they will say, but until they say it, they don’t. Moreover, students often underestimate the amount of time a particular activity or discussion will take. We have had some success in encouraging students to practice their program outside of class, and such practice has been evident in the workshops of those sections that have made this effort.

Finally, the day of the workshop arrives. At this stage the instructors take seats in the audience and let the students run the show. Exactly what form the show takes depends on the students' academic expertise and interests, life experiences, and personal identities. Past iterations of the workshop have treated a wide range of topics, employing an equally wide range of tactics.

The students typically address various dimensions of diversity, broadly addressing issues related to race and ethnicity, religion, gender and sexuality, socioeconomic status, and disability status. The workshops tend to move from the general to the particular, beginning with large-scale issues, like power structures, intersectionality, and systemic racism, and moving toward issues affecting persons as individuals, like stereotype threat and microaggressions. The workshops also tend to move from a problem-oriented to a solution-oriented perspective. After all, the students spend the majority of the semester immersing themselves in social problems that often manifest on a national, if not global, scale, e.g., inequities in public education, food insecurity, mass incarceration, and urban gentrification. These problems, complex as they are, can have a paralyzing and disempowering effect on students, and by the semester's end they are eager to propose solutions.

Frequently students begin with icebreaking exercises intended to acquaint participants with their own and others' identities. These exercises help participants open up to one another and grow comfortable sharing their views on the delicate subjects with which other workshop activities will deal. Students often rely on other standard workshop components like privilege walks, role-play sessions, and student-facilitated discussions based on course readings that have included Alexander, Appiah, Chambers, Freire, Fullilove, Gottlieb and Joshi, hooks, Johnson, Kincaid, Kozol, Ladson-Billings, Rushdie, Moses and Cobb, West, and other sources like McIntosh and Gates and Yacovone.

The students' creativity generally enables them to go far beyond the usual basic elements. Workshop leaders often employ manipulatives and visual aids like the Genderbread person (Killermann) and the identity wheel (Johnson 15). They have also produced companion materials that have included video shorts showcasing fictional encounters with microaggressions and a zine with articles, art, and literature on diversity themes. This last piece—the students titled it “Got Privilege?”—offered various perspectives on the way that the privileges accorded to various persons—on the basis, for instance, of race, sex, and gender—have a negative impact on our society. The student leaders of one of the spring 2015 workshops offered a “safe space.” Located in a nearby classroom, this space, featuring calming craft materials, soothing

music, and soft lighting, served as a retreat for participants who might feel anxiety or trauma during any portion of the workshop itself. Students in one of the spring 2016 workshops hosted a poster session during which workshop participants toured a small display of posters on topics related to social justice.

The activity's flexibility permits yet broader innovation in the workshop structure. A recent class turned the workshop into a forum in which guest speakers addressed the current realities of racial inequity within the local community while students, faculty, and staff discussed what the university is currently doing or can do in the future to address these issues. This group of students put together a poster session to showcase their various research projects. Our community partners eagerly expressed a desire to take and display these posters, recognizing them as educational tools with usefulness beyond the workshop.

## STUDENT RESPONSE

Given the deep engagement with diversity issues that the planning and execution of the workshop entails, we would expect the workshop activity to have a considerable impact on students' understanding of these issues, and we have tried to explore that impact in student surveys. So far 140 students have taken part in the design and delivery of one of the diversity workshops, but only 23 of these students (16.4%) have responded to a survey, delivered as a Google Form, on their experience with the workshop activity. The low response rate is unsurprising given that completion of the survey is not compulsory and most students are asked to take it within days of graduation when they have other things on their minds.

Some survey items asked students to gauge the workshop's effectiveness in terms of its impact on them, with questions like the following:

- To what extent did you feel empowered by the leadership roles the workshop challenged you to assume?
- To what extent did you feel ownership of the ideas you brought to life in the workshop?

Other items asked the students about the workshop's execution:

- Did it run smoothly?
- Did it succeed in putting the course's central ideas into practice?

Still others questioned the workshop's premise:

- Were the topics on which students chose to present relevant and important?
- Were you to teach a similar class, would you assign the workshop activity yourself?

Each of the items summarized in Table 1 offered students a four-point scale of "Disagree strongly" (1), "Disagree a little" (2), "Agree a little" (3), and "Agree strongly" (4). One student was responsible for the lone "disagree" rating on the three items for which there was a single such rating. When given the chance to offer feedback on the workshop activity, this student elaborated on the following concerns:

**TABLE 1. STUDENTS' SENSE OF THE WORKSHOP'S EFFECTIVENESS**

Item Description	<i>n</i> , Disagree ("strongly" = 1 or "a little" = 2)	<i>n</i> , Agree ("strongly" = 4 or "a little" = 3)	Mean, <i>n</i> = 23
I felt empowered by helping to plan or lead the workshop.	3	20	3.26
Student workshop leaders were able to effectively put the ideas learned in the course into practice.	1	22	3.39
Workshop participants gained a better understanding of ideas related to diversity, equity, and inclusion	1	22	3.30
The topics workshops dealt with were relevant to my life outside of school	0	23	3.74
As a workshop leader or planner, I gained a sense of ownership of the ideas the workshop dealt with.	3	20	3.35
The workshop ran more smoothly than I thought it was going to beforehand.	0	23	3.43
If I were to teach a class which dealt with topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, I would find it beneficial to include the workshop assignment.	6	17	3.04
The topics the workshop dealt with were important ones.	0	23	3.87



There were too many people to plan for the amount of time that we had. At times during the planning I felt we couldn't get too much into detail because there were over 15 strong leaders who wanted to put in their input. It would have been more beneficial if there was either someone (a professor or a student leader) who was in charge of leadership and direction rather than trying to have everyone in the class be equally involved. I also would have done the workshop at a different time, a lot of people were overly stressed about finals and being so close to graduation that they didn't have time to take it so seriously.

This student was not the only one to report a negative experience with the activity. Other students who viewed the activity more favorably overall reported similar concerns. In the words of one student,

[T]his workshop took place at the very end of the last semester of every student's final year as a graduating senior. Honors students are nearly categorically overcommitted, driven, high-achieving people, and not one of us had time to do this workshop justice. . . . The end of the semester of an Honors student's senior year is the absolute worst time to have this presentation.

The timing of the activity wasn't the only issue the students identified. Other common concerns were the amount of in-class time allotted for workshop preparation and the amount of guidance given by the instructor. One student tersely suggested "Required, scheduled rehearsals. At least two." Another student said that "if we'd had some guidance or training in how to plan a workshop, or how to speak publicly about sensitive issues, it might have been helpful. Just one class session devoted to discussion of workshops people had been to in the past or had organized, and what worked and what didn't, would have been beneficial." The only other issue that came up as often concerned the structure of the workshop itself: several students reported wishing that there had been more interaction between workshop facilitators and participants. One student said, "The only way I think we could have made it more effective is with better group discussions," and another suggested that "if the leaders would be able to come up with more engaging activities, instead of lectures, I believe it would be a more fun learning experience for the audience."

Table 2 summarizes students' suggestions in response to the survey question "What changes might you have made to the workshop assignment to make it more effective?" The second column indicates the number of students



making a comment grouped under each given category, out of the twenty students who responded to this question.

Despite these concerns, the responses summarized in Table 1 demonstrate that the activity was well received, and students freely reported many positive outcomes. The benefit most commonly reported was the chance the workshop offered students to reflect on ideas discussed in class and to synthesize these ideas for a new audience. One student’s remarks were typical: “It was also helpful to plan a project which culminated all the topics we had learned throughout the course into one hands-on activity. Thinking critically about the subjects in a different manner helped me understand them even better.”

Students also frequently mentioned benefits related to collaboration with their peers during the planning and implementation of the workshop: “I also appreciated hearing each member’s approach to making our topic presentable and meaningful to the audience.” Students also mentioned developing leadership skills through their work on the activity. Students specifically mentioned getting better at conducting discussions, becoming empowered as campus leaders, and gaining real-world experience: “Honors students had a trial-by-fire introduction to how it works in the real world when your boss throws a project at you and tells you to do it with almost no instruction.”

**TABLE 2. STUDENTS’ SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE**  
(NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 20)

Student Suggestion	Number of Students Offering Suggestion	Percentage of Respondents Offering Suggestion
Change the timing of the workshop	5	25.0%
More interactive workshop structure	4	20.0%
More time in class devoted to preparation	4	20.0%
More guidance in designing the workshop	4	20.0%
More structure to the assignment	2	10.0%
Need to engage different audiences	2	10.0%
More stringent requirements for participation	1	5.0%
Firmer grounding the course texts	1	5.0%
Help dealing with the amount of information	1	5.0%
Better management of workshop invitations	1	5.0%
Involve more persons of color in workshop planning	1	5.0%

Eighteen students responded to the question “What aspects of the workshop assignment and the workshop itself do you feel were most beneficial to you?” The benefits students indicated are recorded in Table 3. Most students did not mention diversity, equity, and inclusion explicitly in their comments, but their frequent references to the course material, in which the concepts played a central role, suggest that the workshop activity had a positive effect on their understanding of and engagement with these ideas. The few comments that made explicit reference to diversity issues suggest a profound impact on some students. One student, in particular, was helped to gain a greater awareness of his own privilege and its implications for his interactions with others:

Being confronted with big scary ideas like systemic discrimination and then being asked to explain it to a large crowd of people who may have never heard of it or even know how it works—this is not an experience people will have, and it makes it so that I have to dig deeper into what I’ve been readily prepared to accept and ask some serious questions about it. . . . I keep thinking about the implications

**TABLE 3. STUDENT-REPORTED BENEFITS (NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 18)**

Benefit	Number of Students Reporting Benefit	Percentage of Respondents Reporting Benefit
Reflecting on course work and ideas	7	38.9%
Collaborating with peers	5	27.8%
Gaining leadership skills	4	22.2%
Gaining organizational skills	4	22.2%
Engaging an authentic audience	3	16.7%
Collaborating with guest speakers	3	16.7%
Gaining new perspectives	2	11.1%
Engaging with the broader community off campus	2	11.1%
Building community on campus	1	5.6%
Developing greater awareness of one’s own identity	1	5.6%
Developing a useful learning technique	1	5.6%

of being a straight, white male everywhere I go. My responsibilities in this project demonstrated to me that at some root level, everything about cultivating global citizenship is interconnected.

Such interconnectedness is evident even in the workshop's typical audience. In every version of the workshop, community members (both the campus community and the wider community, including service learning partners, guest speakers, students' co-workers, and internship supervisors) have participated. This participation has helped connect faculty with other faculty and with community partners, establishing connections that might not otherwise have been made. Results include aligning faculty scholarship with the needs of area non-profits, sharing resources, and generating enthusiasm in the knowledge that others are working to address similar ends. The networking opportunities alone have resonated across the community.

## THE FUTURE

The workshop activity appears to be successful at helping participating students gain a greater understanding of diversity issues, yet we suspect it has only begun to realize its potential for providing similar benefits to much wider audiences. The workshop activity might, for instance, serve as a common assignment for all of the university's interdisciplinary capstone courses. We have had conversations with the campus coordinator for senior capstone courses about the possibility of piloting a non-honors version, and although it would face certain obstacles, e.g., typically greater class sizes and less motivated students, the activity might grant a large portion of the campus community an ongoing opportunity to engage in conversation on critical social issues.

However, there is work yet to be done within our honors program as well. So far, only the two of us have made use of the workshop activity because one or the other of us has taught nearly every honors section of the capstone course for the past four years. Given steady increases in demand for the course over that time period, we have needed to find more faculty members who are interested in teaching it. One new teacher, though, plans to assign the activity in both the honors section and the first non-honors section of the course during this academic year. Looking ahead, this colleague noted:

I am planning on assigning the workshop in the fall for several reasons.

1) If it's not broke, don't fix it! 2) I think it's a very important experience for students to be given the opportunity to design a workshop

not just for other students, but for the community. The majority of projects that students are asked to design in/for their classes tend to be for presentation to peers (understandably so). For students to be given the responsibility of applying what they have learned in terms of presentation, leading discussion, etc., to a larger audience, especially an off-campus audience, is important. . . . [T]he only thing I think I might do differently is the workshop theme. Given my background [in international aid and development], I really do like the theme of Cultivating Citizenship. Thinking while I am typing, I might plan to put it to the students to choose between the two themes.

We have also had conversations about our activity with other campus organizations concerned with diversity, including the Center for Diversity Education (CDE). This organization maintains a number of resources on diversity issues, including exhibits, road shows, and a lending library, all of which are made available not only to members of the UNC Asheville community but to citizens throughout Western North Carolina. The executive director, who has attended more than one of our classes' workshops, has shown interest in making our students' activity a model for more regular student-led workshops on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Several members of the university's Diversity Action Council have also attended our classes' workshops and have been impressed with what they have seen.

Given its widespread acclaim, we suspect that the workshop activity has a bright future on our campus and in the broader community of which it is an integral part. Our honors program is thus serving as an incubator of innovation, and, as Portnoy and others have argued, an important role of honors is to provide testing grounds for experimental or speculative projects that can later be adapted to a non-honors environment.

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# Honors in Practice

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RESEARCH ABOUT HONORS



## Academic Socialization: Mentoring New Honors Students in Metadiscourse

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Discussion-based classes are a defining characteristic of honors curricula (National Collegiate Honors Council). Of the 177 institutions to describe their curriculum in the *Official Online Guide to Honors Colleges and Programs*, 50% promote their classes as “discussion” or “discussion-based.” The descriptions include the following: “Honors Seminars are unique, discussion-based courses” at the University of Minnesota; “Discussion-based seminars . . . [provide] the highest level of personal attention” at Villanova; and the importance of “Discussion-based courses, where lecturing is avoided” at Western Carolina. I, too, follow a conversational learning model, a “dialogic pedagogy” (Knauer 44), in my honors teaching. Students learn by externalizing their thoughts in debate with others, and helping students improve their abilities to discuss topics is thus a key element of higher education. This study reveals techniques that faculty can use to help students hone their thinking and learn the fine art and skill of effective oral discourse.

I facilitated learning and socialized students into academic life by introducing my Succeeding in Honors class to spoken metadiscourse. According to one of its leading researchers, socialization into academic life takes place largely in and through the spoken word (Mauranen, “‘But Here’s’”). Students, from the first-year seminar to the thesis defense, are expected to situate their discourse in the larger academic conversation. While the thesis and publications will matter later in an undergraduate’s life, new students display the rigor of their thinking in the structure of their spoken language. Independent of course grades, I asked students to use verbal cues to signal agreement, dissension, or return to a previous point. My goal was for students to discern that expert discussion includes metadiscourse, defined as talk about the ongoing talk, and that signaling recognition of others’ views, paradoxically, gives greater visibility and clarity to their own points of view. As students found their own contexts to encode new ideas, they used metadiscourse to translate their thought process into language. While both written and oral communication includes metadiscourse, the presence of others makes the deepened inquiry of oral communication a collective responsibility.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The value of a dialogic pedagogy is well established. An abundance of research beginning in the 1970s supports the importance of discussion-based classes to learning (Brookfield and Preskill; Finkel; O’Connor; Owen; Roehling et al.; Taylor). In view of the importance of discussion in honors curricula, research on student-centered discussion is integral to honors education (Casteel and Bridges; De Volder et al.; Getty; Griffiths et al.; Linkin; Phillips and Powers; Sternberg). In particular, NCHC’s iconic City as Text™ explorations capture the foundational quality of discussion in an honors education, stimulating the kind of “long-term sensitivity and reflection” characteristic of honors discussion (Braid 25, 23).

Complicating the practice of dialogic pedagogy is the fact that millennials (born around 1980) are different in their approach to information. They have easy access to information, but not to sorting it out (Carr; Medina; Roehling et al.; Wilson). They have the desire for face-to-face interaction, if not the facility for it. Despite students’ different approach to information, researchers have found that “the kind of information that is still most valued by the students interviewed is face-to-face” (Sánchez et al. 554). The preference for a face-to-face learning experience is a finding supported by research in the United Kingdom (Committee of Inquiry; Ipsos MORI) and the United

States (Smith et al.). In an attempt to explain millennial student preference for face-to-face communication, Turkle stated, “Today’s young people have a special vulnerability: although always connected, they feel deprived of attention” (“Alone Together” 294). Wilson determined, furthermore, that because they grew up working in groups and playing on teams, millennials “face difficulties in learning to think independently and articulate their positions” (60). Student-centered discussion provides an opportunity for millennials to feel connected to the group, while gaining experience at sorting out new information. As they make their self-reflecting activity explicit to the group, students develop their identity as undergraduates.

Despite the foundational quality of discussion in the education of millennials, student-centered dialogic pedagogy—in contrast to “teacher-directed Socratic dialogue” (Knauer 40)—appears not to be the norm in honors. Knauer observed, “Even in honors classrooms that feature student discussion, student-to-student dialogue is rarely at the center of a course, shaping its content and directing the learning process” (40). In the same manner that Knauer supported his claim, I compared the 2010 version of “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” (NCHC Board of Directors) and the now sixty-year-old version from the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (Rinn). Knauer’s observation appears equally valid today: “While the current version [of “Basic Characteristics”] has much more to say about administration than about pedagogy, the older version specifically recommends ‘elimination of lecturing and passive note taking’ (p. 75)” (41). Instead of teacher-led discussion, new undergraduates need to be encouraged to direct their own learning process. In a student-led discussion, the challenge to reorganize opposing perspectives falls on the students rather than the teacher. Learning often occurs when speakers can signal their thought process through their reflexive language. Simply put, contextualizing or reformulating a concept helps the speaker grasp it.

In the context of cognitive psychology, the Inventory of Learning Processes has served as a useful tool to measure the learning style of honors students (Schmeck et al.). Deep Processing, one of its scales, assesses the extent to which students evaluate, organize, and compare and contrast the information; it includes conventional linear processing and fact retention. To shape the classroom conversation, however, students need to do more than rote learning: they need to translate the new information into their own vocabulary. The Elaborative Processing scale assesses the ability to restate and reorganize information in relation to one’s own experiences. While honors

students are eager to join the conversation, they are often uncertain about how to encode their classmates' ideas into their own contexts. Metadiscourse offers verbal codes that stimulate Elaborative Processing. As students translate their classmates' new information into their own terms, they improve their Elaborative Processing. To measure their improvement, Carnicom and Clump proposed using the Inventory of Learning Processes as a longitudinal assessment tool, tracking developmental changes in honors students' learning styles across their undergraduate career.

Remarkably, studies have shown that honors students' Elaborative Processing is no more developed than in their non-honors peers. Carnicom and Clump concluded in their investigation of the learning styles of honors and non-honors students that honors students enter college "already actively organizing and critically evaluating information to a greater degree than their peers" (41). While they found that new honors students scored significantly higher on Deep Processing, they also found that "honors students do not initially personalize or apply information in more meaningful ways than their non-honors peers" (38). To improve Elaborative Processing in honors students, Carnicom and Clump suggested tailoring honors courses to better facilitate Elaborative Processing. Millennials need formal opportunities to articulate their viewpoints to others, to recognize and contextualize others' viewpoints, and to hear their own viewpoints restated.

Spoken academic metadiscourse addresses the need to develop honors students' Elaborative Processing. Discussion calls for students to reformulate multiple perspectives in quick succession. However, as applied linguists have noted, research on metadiscourse has studied written language more than spoken language (Hyland, "Metadiscourse: Mapping"; Vande Kopple, "Some Exploratory," "The Importance"). A representative study of a professional genre, for example, examined the use of metadiscourse in introductory sections of environmental reports (Skulstad), showing how the metadiscourse helped establish the relationship, maintain confidence, and reinforce the relationship with the reader. Research on academic genres has combined the study of written and spoken language by comparing university lectures to graduate student essays (Ädel) and comparing oral discussions to the persuasive essays of children (Latawiec). Research on metadiscourse focused specifically on academic discussion ranges from studies of metadiscourse in student presentations (Magnuczne Godó) to analyses of particular discourse markers such as "I'm just saying . . ." (Craig and Sanusi). Until recently, most past studies focused on written or one-way spoken discourse.

In the last two decades, metadiscourse research has begun to investigate co-constructed spoken academic genres. Hyland noted the interactivity and more egalitarian nature of discourse in seminar, in contrast to lecture (“Metadiscourse”). Zhang et al. investigated metadiscourse by middle school students working on team projects. In his descriptive study, Swales focused on the uses of *point* (as in “my point is”) and *thing* (as in “the thing is”) as “commentary by speakers about where the discourse has been, where it is going, and why” (34–35). I hope to add to the research into spoken academic discourse, specifically the area of student-centered class discussion. Seminal to my study, Mauranen’s “‘But Here’s a Flawed Argument’: Socialisation into and through Metadiscourse” examined the role of discourse reflexivity, focusing on *argue* in evaluative contexts. Her research captured the socializing role of discourse reflexivity from a developmental perspective.

Instead of examining cues used to organize the talk itself, as Swales does, I took Mauranen’s approach, focusing on cues identifying whose talk is being commented on, organized, or elicited: the speaker’s own or the person addressed. My study responded to Mauranen’s challenge to “furnish new insights into the processes of academic socialization and of negotiating complex positions and identities” (“Reflexive Academic Talk” 177). Mauranen observed that throughout students’ path towards socialization, “academic talk is mainly left to take care of itself without very much explicit teaching” (“A Good Question” 2). I hope to add a practical framework for teaching metadiscourse to those at the beginning of their academic path. To nurture the growth of their undergraduate identity, I tailored my Succeeding in Honors seminar to encourage students to voice their Elaborative Processing in discussion.

## METHODS

For three fall semesters, I documented, analyzed, and compared students’ metadiscourse. My investigation was largely qualitative, with supportive quantitative data from my 2014, 2015, and 2016 honors seminars. I mentored the groups in increments, each year adding an element to my study (see Figure 1): the 2014 group held student-led discussion; the 2015 group also observed metadiscourse models and participated in focus groups; in addition, the 2016 group completed surveys of their discussion skills and roles. My purpose was to determine the effects of mentoring students in metadiscourse. How did their use of metadiscourse affect discussion? How did students perceive its effects on learning and on themselves as honors undergraduates? In brief, did their use of reflexive language affect their academic and social capital?

Participants

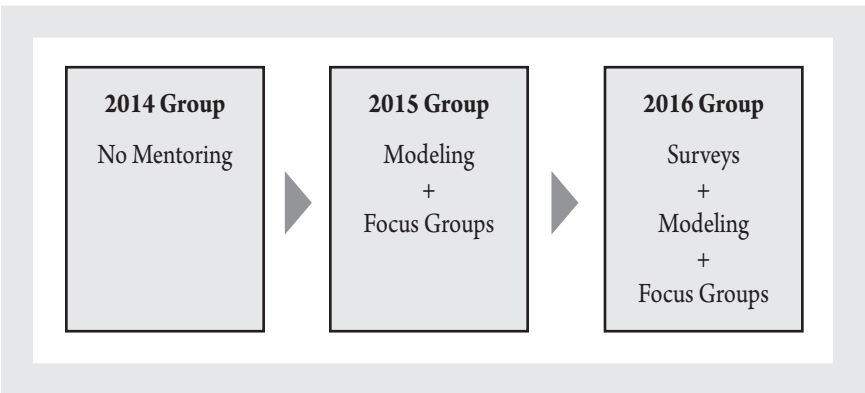
A total of 59 incoming honors students over three years ranging in age from 17 to 21 years enrolled in my Succeeding in Honors seminar, one of six taught by different instructors in the fall semester. The 2014 and 2015 groups consisted of 20 students each, while the 2016 group consisted of 19 students. Characteristic of our regional university, the groups shared similar demographics for gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status although the average ACT scores of the classes improved slightly each year (28.4, 28.7, and 29.1). No participant knew of my research prior to enrolling. All gave their informed consent to participate in the study.

Procedures

To study the metadiscourse of beginning honors students, I selected a course designed as an introduction to the honors program. The required one-credit Student Success Seminar met weekly for an hour in a classroom suited for recording round table discussion. With the exception of our first meeting and two others focused on invited guests, we held a new student-led discussion each week through the Thanksgiving break. The course ended with students delivering an elevator pitch on their independent research.

The corpus of my study was the ten student-led discussions held each year. A pair of assigned co-leaders composed the pre-class forum questions, guided the discussion, scored their classmates according to self-designed rubrics (unrelated to metadiscourse), and submitted a post-discussion reflection for the course website. All students co-led a discussion. Every student

FIGURE 1. THE RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE STUDY





participated in almost all discussions. To ensure a student-centered conversation and to avoid pre-empting the student leaders, I excluded myself from the conversation for the first twenty minutes of each class (as suggested by Dierenfield). My limited participation in discussion differed from that of students only in that my contributions modeled metadiscourse by intentionally responding to and engaging with speakers.

As the co-leaders guided discussion, I documented the group's metadiscourse in two ways: (1) I recorded discussion using a Snowball microphone placed in the center of the room, sent the audio files to the university's transcription services, and received the text versions; (2) I took verbatim notes to identify speakers and the beginnings of their utterances.

I defined interpersonal metadiscourse as reflexive expressions referring to the evolving discussion by referencing the speaker's speech, responding to a listener, or eliciting a response from a listener. Mauranen explained these three types of metadiscourse in her classification system:

Reflexive expressions can be classified according to their target in the interactive situation; they can be targeted on the speaker's own discourse, on that of another participant, or on the discourse situation more generally. This targeting reflects on the speaker's choices by which he or she explicitly positions himself/herself in relation to the discourse and the participants. In this way, three main types of targeted expressions can be distinguished: the monologic, the dialogic, and the interactive. ("Reflexive Academic Talk" 171)

Her investigations of two-way academic speech contexts such as seminars and thesis defenses led her to conclude that "new models of metadiscourse must take the dialogic perspective of interaction seriously on board" because "in argumentative discussion other-oriented reflexivity is particularly salient" ("Discourse Reflexivity" 37–38). To classify my students' comments, I adapted Mauranen's terminology, as summarized in Ädel's 2010 overview (74):

- Monologic elements organize the speaker's own talk.
- Dialogic elements respond to the interlocutor's talk.
- Interactive elements elicit a response from the interlocutor.

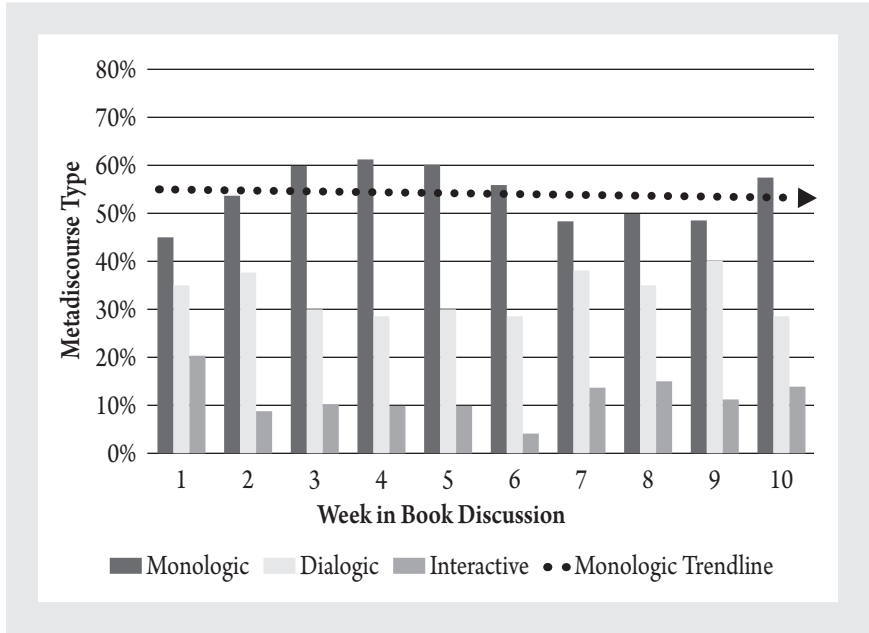
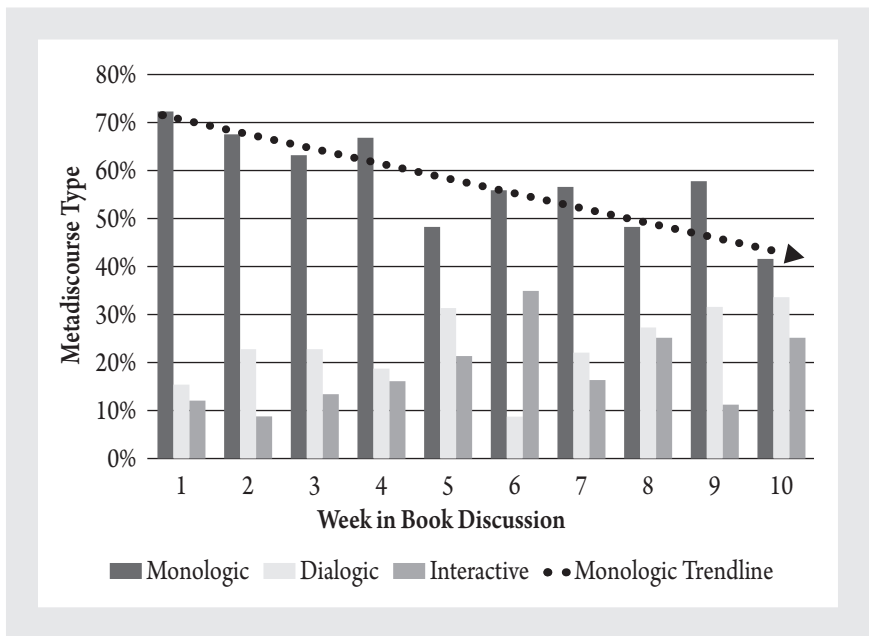
After manually classifying the metadiscourse used in each week's discussion, I entered the metadiscursive elements into a table. For individual comparison data, the table listed each student's elements chronologically with

a column for each of the three types, indicating those uttered in the first five weeks and those in the subsequent five weeks. For group comparison data, I entered the weekly quantities of each type into Excel; they are summarized as percentages of all utterances in Figures 2, 3, and 4 below.

Each year I added an element to the way I engaged the class in metadiscourse. To define the baseline for discussion, I did not introduce metadiscourse as such to the 2014 group. Instead, I encouraged students at our first meeting to use the class as an arena to develop their discussion leadership skills. At the end of two classes, I asked the group to reflect on their discussion. The 2014 baseline allowed me to rule out confidence gained from time in college as a factor since all 59 participants were first-semester students.

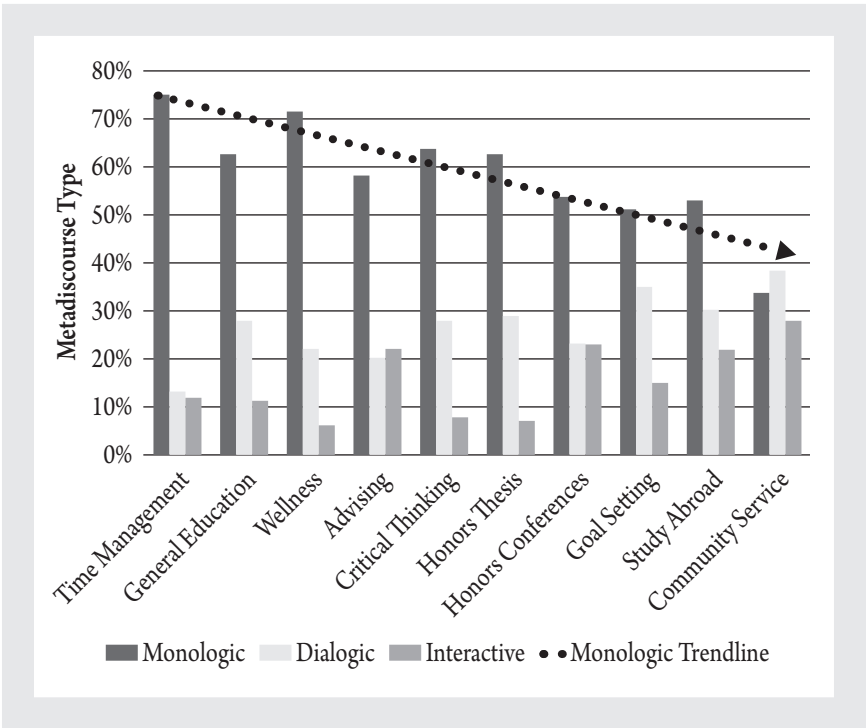
The next year, I explained that I was investigating metadiscourse and, after the fifth and tenth discussions, conducted 20-minute focus groups. I invited students' observations on their metadiscourse use in general as well as any specific comments on their individual use and group trends. With the 2016 group, I again conducted focus groups to gather student observations. The first focus group occurred after the fifth discussion, when I provided the group with data to consider: (1) a table of individual metadiscourse; (2) a summary of group trends; and (3) a list of reflexive speech that was used by NCHC students during three sessions at the 2016 conference and that I brought back to ECU as models for my less experienced students. I conducted the second focus group after the tenth discussion, when I shared the updated individual and group data.

The final year, the 2016 group completed two email surveys on discussion. I conducted the Skills Survey (see Appendix A) pre-, mid- and post-course and the Roles Survey (Appendix D) mid- and post-course. Given two email reminders, each survey had 100% participation from the 19 participants. Skills Survey Questions 1 to 4 were open-ended questions about speaking experience, with the results summarized in Appendix B. Skills Survey Questions 5 to 14 required students to respond with a rating on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. To analyze the results, I used Excel. I grouped responses to the ten quantitative questions regarding student perception of interpersonal cues according to the question category: Figure 5 summarizes perceived effects (Q9–14); Figure 6 presents perceived skill level (Q7–8); and Appendix C displays comfort level (Q5–6). The Roles Survey, adapted from Benne and Sheats, asked students to identify the discussion roles at which they excelled. I entered the values in Excel as summarized in Figure 7.

**FIGURE 2. METADISOURSE BY 2014 GROUP****FIGURE 3. METADISOURSE BY 2015 GROUP**

Metadiscourse in itself was incidental (less than 5%) as a topic for discussion. Students taking the pre-course survey began the course with a strong idea of what “interpersonal cues” are. In Question 7, I defined interpersonal cues via example. In Question 8, I explained that such phrases as “you stole my point” and “what do you think” share a recognition of other speakers, refer to something they said, relate what they say to what someone else said, or ask a question. While I promoted the use of reflexive language with my modelling and surveys, except for conducting two 20-minute focus groups I did not interrupt discussion of the course’s scheduled topics with instruction on using interpersonal cues. Nor did the data I collected on their use of reflexive language factor into their grade. A former member of the 2014 group served as the peer mentor to my 2015 and 2016 groups. As my teaching assistant, she attended classes, evaluated forum posts, assisted in evaluating the project presentation, and maintained the gradebook. My role as researcher was to collect student perceptions and elicit their comments as well as to collect information from field notes, discussion board posts, and course evaluations. As a teacher, however, I intentionally modelled reflexive language whenever I spoke.

FIGURE 4. METADISDISCOURSE BY 2016 GROUP



## FINDINGS

Study results indicated that with mentoring and practice, discussion became more interactional, regardless of the topic. Students became more aware of the role of metadiscourse in discussion, increased its use, and developed leadership.

### Effects of Metadiscourse on Discussion

Metadiscourse caused discussion to become more interactional. Figures 3 and 4 summarize the 2015 and 2016 groups' metadiscourse. As Figure 3 shows, metadiscourse in the 2015 group's first discussion consisted of 73% monologue, 13% dialogue, and 14% interaction. However, the tenth discussion revealed a difference, with monologic elements decreasing to 41% while combined dialogic and interactive elements increased to 59%. The 2016 group's combined dialogic and interactive elements increased to 66%.

The starting point for all three groups was monologue. Only the unmentored 2014 group discussion resulted in a flat monological trendline (see Figure 2). The group members often began their statements with the default lead-in for discussion: variations of the phrase "I think" or "I feel."

The mentored 2015 and 2016 groups increased engagement and interaction despite discussing radically different topics. While the 2016 group talked about topics such as time management, honors thesis, and community service, the 2015 group discussed the school-wide book selection, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. The discussions of ethical issues in medicine became as interactional as the discussions of ways to succeed in honors.

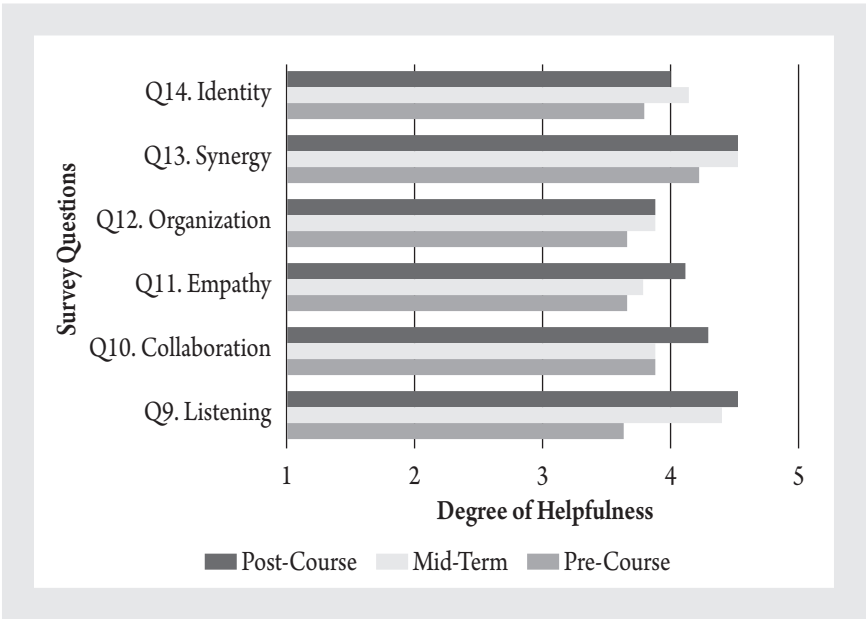
### Effects of Metadiscourse on Students

To understand students' motives for using metadiscourse, I surveyed the 2016 group's awareness of its uses (see Appendix A). Figure 5 displays the extent to which they felt interpersonal cues helped create group synergy, facilitate listening, increase collaboration, improve empathy, coalesce individual identity, and organize thoughts. Pre-course, the group's mean rating for the overall effectiveness of interpersonal cues was 3.8. Post-course, the overall mean rating was 4.2. Already expressing a high awareness of its effectiveness pre-course, the group became somewhat more aware of its role over time. Listening was the category that showed most improvement.

Figure 6 indicates that students’ perception of their skill using metadiscourse remained the same although they recognized improved skill in others. On reviewing the individual metadiscourse data, one student reported that she “remembered what other people said” more than what she had said. Pre-course, students reported their mean skill at 3.4, but the data did not reflect a high skill rating with only 25% of the utterances in the first discussion using interpersonal cues (see Figure 4). At the outset of the semester, the group overestimated their skill. Post-course, the group underestimated their skill: whereas they rated their skill mean at 3.5, the individual data indicate that 79% of the group had increased their combined dialogic and interactive elements in the last five discussions.

Unlike the 2014 data, the 2015 and 2016 metadiscourse revealed characteristic patterns. These habitual patterns emerged as students increased their reflexive language. Reflecting on her data, one student noted, “A lot [of interpersonal cues] were the same.” Participants prefaced their conversation with favorite lead-ins, such as “The way I look at it” or “I agree.” Table 1 illustrates one student’s patterns, with the repeated elements “I think” and “going off of” in boldface. As she developed her ideas by reformulating those of her classmates, student SD’s cues directed the conversation. Her engagement markers had a cumulative effect on the group and helped make “going off” the dialogic

**FIGURE 5. EFFECTIVENESS OF METADISCOURSE BY 2016 GROUP**

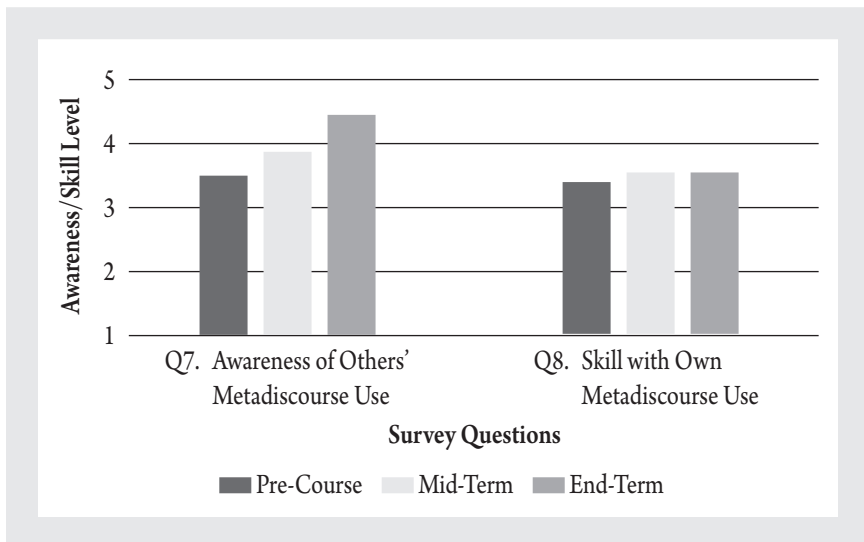


transition of choice for the 2015 group. The 2016 group validated each other with similar metadiscourse sequences, rating their synergy at a mean of 4.5 (see Figure 5). No individuals were so influential that their absence affected discussion.

To understand how students identified their roles in discussion, I asked students to indicate the discussion roles in which they excelled. The Roles Survey found a change in the roles students identified for themselves. Figure 7 shows that most students identified with group building and maintenance roles at mid-term, but at end-term identified with group task roles. The percentage of students excelling in group task roles increased for five of the six group task categories and decreased for five of the six group building and maintenance categories. At end-term, over 60% of the group identified with the group task roles of clarifier, information giver, information seeker, summarizer, and initiator in that order (see Figure 7). The only group task role in which fewer excelled was the role of opinion seeker (32%). According to the pre-course Skills Survey, 21% of the group expressed being nervous about introducing a conflicting opinion because, as one student later explained, in a social setting “nobody likes conflict.”

The Roles Survey found that “compromiser” was the one group-building and maintenance role in which the group improved, with 58% of the group indicating they excelled in the role at end-term. According to the results of the Skills Survey, students’ comfort level with discussion in a class setting

**FIGURE 6. METADISCOURSE SKILLS PERCEIVED BY 2016 GROUP**



changed from a mean rating of 3.4 pre-course to a mean of 4.4 post-course and in a professional setting from a mean rating of 3.0 pre-course to a mean of 3.7 at the end of the semester (see Appendix C).

DISCUSSION

Enhanced Awareness of Elaborative Process

Both mentoring and practice helped increase the interactive metadiscourse. As the students gained experience with metadiscourse, they increased their Elaborative Processing and discussion became more interactional. I took the opportunity to teach students a way of processing information that Carnicom and Clump have shown is no more developed in honors than in non-honors students. According to Bransford and the National Research Council, metacognition is not learned naturally; it has to be taught. Since developing rhetorical skills was not a designated learning outcome for the course, I relied on indirect techniques to hone student thinking and oral discourse. When I asked students to reflect on a discussion, they indirectly described Elaborative Processing. One student explained “pretty great” discussion by saying, “I think there were more questions definitely, like follow-up questions. I think

TABLE 1. STUDENT SD’S PATTERN OF METADISCOURSE IN 2015 GROUP

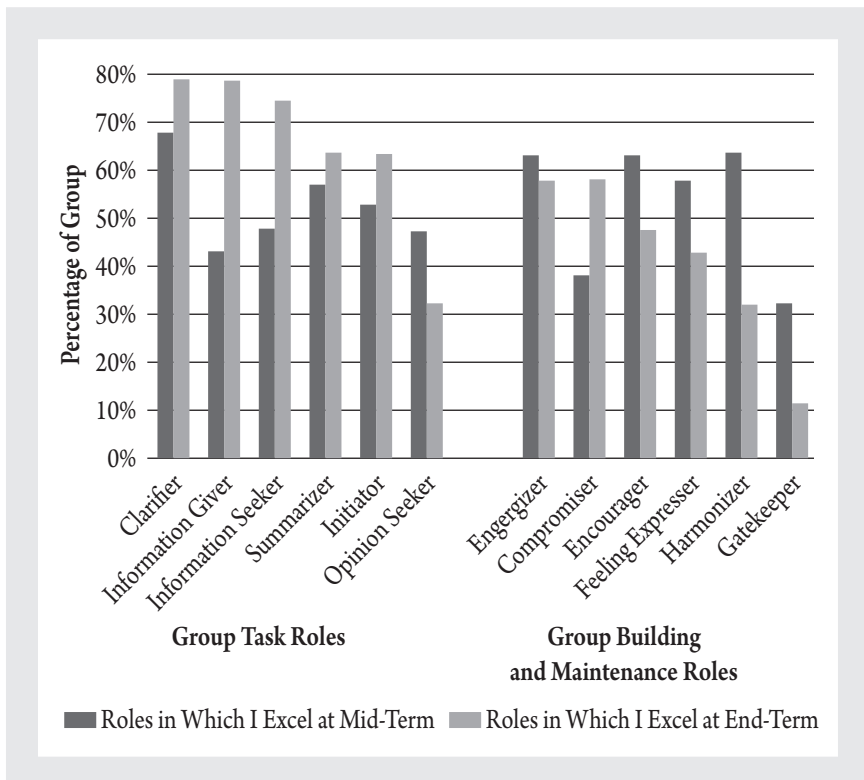
Monologic Elements	Dialogic Elements	Interactive Elements
<i>I think</i>	<b>Going back</b> to what Jenny was saying	Is it possible . . . ?
<i>I think</i> that	Also <b>goes back to</b> what Haley was saying	
<i>I think</i>	I was <b>going to try to answer</b> your question	
<i>I don't think</i>	I agree with you	
<i>I think</i>	I'm actually <b>going to go off</b> what you just said and what Sami just said	
Honestly I just wanted	<b>Going off of</b> what both of them said	
He really makes me angry	<b>Going back to</b> what Haley was saying . . . like Austin said	
I understand	<b>Going off what</b> Kasey said	
<i>I think</i> that it was really	<b>Going off . . .</b> , it broke my heart	
<i>I think</i> it's	<b>Going off what</b> both said	



we kind of just went out there and just gave our opinion more.” Someone else said, “We just didn’t answer just the question, pose another, and didn’t have any more thoughts and just went through each question fast. We actually had a discussion.” Although their comments recognized dialogic and interactive elements that suggested Elaborative Processing, the 2014 group lacked the tools to control a discussion.

To manage discussion, students developed specificity in their Elaborative Processing. I invited rather than required the 2015 and 2016 groups to experiment with reflexive language while offering no tangible reward for its use. Nevertheless, the mentored groups became more deliberate, explicit, and precise in linking new ideas with their prior knowledge. The expression “Yeah, I like that, but I’m going in the opposite direction” illustrates the 2016 group’s nonspecific metadiscourse. In contrast, an NCHC participant restated the conversation in terms of “the divide” between honors and non-honors students: “I was wondering whether other people have experienced the divide.”

**FIGURE 7. DISCUSSION ROLES IN WHICH 2016 GROUP EXCELLED**



Another conference participant verbalized her Elaborative Processing by connecting with the speaker, hedging, and redirecting the conversation: “Just hopping off that, perhaps there’s also the social capital and access issue.” As students refined their Elaborative Processing, their metadiscourse became equally specific.

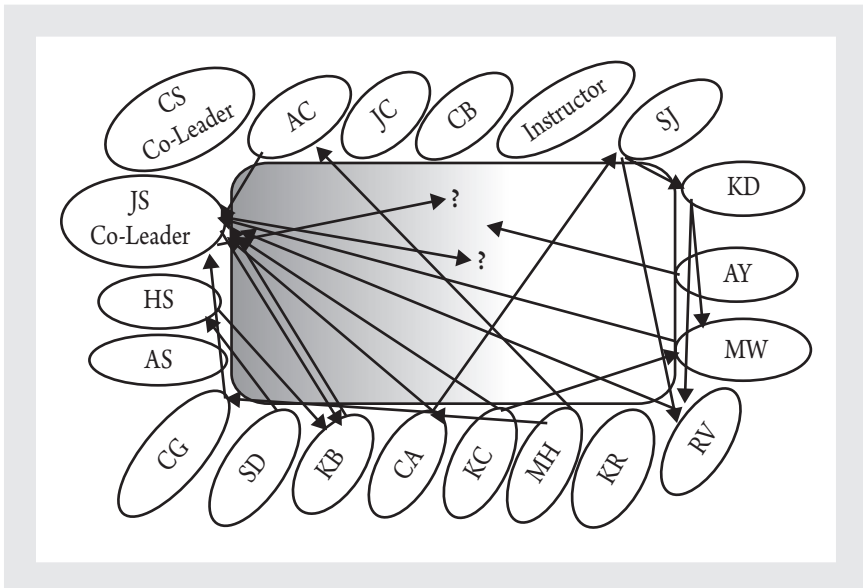
The focus groups brought metadiscourse to the discussion for only two 20-minute sessions. While students’ comments showed a raised awareness of reflexive language, the data required more debriefing. My effort as a researcher to remain objective prevented my asking whether their subjective perceptions matched the data of their individual metadiscourse. One finding showed that mentoring in metadiscourse did not make students feel more skilled, but the metadiscourse data show that half of the 2015 group and over three-fourths of the 2016 group increased their metadiscourse. Consistent with the increased use, the post-course Roles Survey showed that over three-fourths of the 2016 group increased their identification with group task roles in discussion. Similarly, the post-course Skills Survey showed that the 2016 group’s comfort level with discussion in both academic and professional settings increased a full point on the 5-point Likert scale. I interpreted the fact that students did not feel more skilled in terms of their realization that mastering oral discourse is a challenging process.

## **The Intentionality of Metadiscourse**

The 2014 group’s monological trend line suggests that a discussion environment alone does not ensure dialogue and interaction. In contrast, the 2015 and 2016 groups matured from one-sided sharing to interactional discourse. Speakers began to recognize each other. As Figure 8 shows, in the five-minute block of discussion, the co-leader raised two questions, student AY addressed the group as a whole, and the others engaged or interacted with a classmate. Metadiscourse, even in written texts, makes “participants and feelings visible” through the choice to promote rapport (Abdi et al. 1677). The finding that a different course agenda did not affect the results is significant because it suggests that the psychological desire to bond was more important to the students than the course material. Despite the leader-centric quality of the block of discussion, 16 of the 20 group members contributed to this five-minute segment. The 13% of the 2016 group concerned about “getting left out” of discussion especially appreciated having their ideas recognized (see Appendix B). Leading with an interpersonal cue provided the shy students a technique to help them compose their response.

In addition to enabling students to recognize and be recognized, signaling Elaborative Processing with interpersonal cues allowed the conversation to become less ego-driven. The metadiscourse created a coherent discussion and a cohesive group. Even though academic talk derives from everyday metadiscourse, students became aware that reflexive academic talk has an institutional position of authority. As part of his research on language and social interaction, Craig examined how his students' "announcement and formulation of the issue" led the class's interactive constructions of an argument by making the issue under discussion available to other participants as a "metadiscursive object" (26). Craig's student, Jim, argued his viewpoint in relation to the rest of the class's views. As a result, Jim's argument became "progressively more coherent as it [emerged] in successive reformulations" (27). This progression is representative of how metadiscourse contributes to a more cohesive group dynamic. As students became aware of metadiscourse's normative basis in academic talk, they were more willing to practice it. Similar to Craig's study of the metadiscursive formulations in an undergraduate class of 20 students, my 2015 group came to understand the issues through the reflective discourse they used to interject ideas and question the ones already presented:

**FIGURE 8. DIAGRAM OF FIVE-MINUTE BLOCK OF DISCUSSION, NOVEMBER 5, 2015**



- Megan, you ask brilliant and meaningful questions during discussion and overall lead the group to look at things differently . . . you showed that you understood multiple views of situations. Nice. (posted by KB)
- Calvin, you seem like you know a little bit about everything, and I am very envious! You were always questioning and trying to understand others [sic] points of view during the discussion. I think that is very awesome! (posted by CS)
- [Sami,] It was neat to see you using more dialogic/interactive discussions [sic] methods as the semester went on—that's definitely something that's hard to do, at least in my opinion. (posted by JS)

For students to negotiate differences of opinion, however, they needed to develop more than the “Yes and” approach to metadiscourse. Acknowledging previous speakers with the ubiquitous “going off of what she said” circumvented the need for students to articulate differences of position. The pre-course finding that 21% of the 2016 group expressed nervousness about introducing conflicting opinion was offset by a 2015-group student expressing admiration for the independent classmate who demonstrated the “ability to stand [her] ground and give insights that are unique and valuable [and] boosted our class discussions and got the entire class thinking outside of the box!”

## The Formality of Leadership

A significant study finding was how many students valued, respected, or aspired to leadership. In their comments about each other, students recognized and marshaled the group's resources. They came to see the leadership role in Benne and Sheats' terms as “functions to be performed within a group in helping that group to grow and to work productively” (41). The Roles Survey suggests that most of the 2016 group made a fundamental shift from excelling at group-building and maintenance roles in discussion to excelling in group-task roles. At end-term, 79% of the group excelled in the roles of clarifier and information giver. The metadiscourse data showed the same 79% increased their metadiscourse: 14 out of 15 identified as clarifiers; 12 out of 15 identified as information givers. This shift suggests that the 2016 group diffused the “leadership” functions among the group members. Furthermore, the students most comfortable using metadiscourse to help the group grow also reported having considerable speaking experience. Two of the clarifier/information givers, RH and KM, reported having had three years' debate experience.

Other researchers have reported a link between leadership and interactional metadiscourse. Though initially focused on professors lecturing, Mauranen found that “those in a dominant position in any speech event will use more reflexive expressions” (“Reflexive Academic Talk” 170). Another study, albeit of one-way student presentations, similarly found that “effective presenters were distinguished by a higher proportion of interactive and dialogic elements, with dialogic elements dominating” (Magnuczné Godó 75). Ideally, Benne and Sheats observe, the concept of leadership—emphasized here by using metadiscourse to marshal the various resources in the group—is that of “a multilaterally shared responsibility” (41). Students in the 2016 group able to mediate difference helped raise the class’s comfort level in discussion by 20% in both classroom and professional settings (see Appendix C).

Yet student comments suggest a spirited resistance to the formality of metadiscourse. Students readily acknowledged that metadiscourse “connects the dots,” “lets the other person know you know what they said,” and “shows respect.” No student questioned that interpersonal cues make various communication tasks easier. Nevertheless, as one student pointed out, his discussion is typically “not as formal” as discussion needing metadiscourse. Another student attributed the pervasive use of *yeah* to the group having established a relaxed therapeutic setting for seminar. Yet another explained the persistent use of the nonspecific pronoun *that* (as in “I agree with that”) by explaining that *that* represented the speaker’s “continuation of what [the previous speaker] was saying.” Even though students knew that metadiscourse connects the dots, some preferred to keep their conversation informal.

One reason for millennials’ informality may stem from growing up in a faster-paced, digital culture in which metadiscourse is not second nature to their conversation. Millennials talk differently; they learned their discourse patterns differently. Interpersonal cues are not formally on their radar even though they may appear in digital forms such as tagging and retweeting. Like the interpersonal cues in oral discourse, these digital forms of metadiscourse can bring new people into the conversation, providing millennials with the recognition Turkle has contended they crave (“Alone Together”). By contrast, today’s students may see oral metadiscourse as a superfluous form of decorum. They may even interpret this type of “university idiom” as an expression of professorial authority (Bourdieu et al. 108). Teachers can help millennials socialize into academic culture by providing varied opportunities with team assignments, poster presentations, and student-centered discussion. The different contexts allow students to practice leadership with oral discourse and experience the appropriateness of formal language.

## APPROACHES TO MENTORING

The instructor can integrate a number of approaches in discussion to mentor honors students in metadiscourse. Following are the ways I have used to help students develop the reflexive language of successful members of the academy and the professions:

1. **Model the metadiscourse use in discussion.** By deliberately referencing the previous speaker and then asking a question, the instructor can illustrate the use of interpersonal cues. She can also provide a list of reflexive speech used by the students' more experienced cohort at the NCHC conference.
2. **Ask students to reflect on their discussion skills.** Request that students identify the discussion roles in which they excel and those in which they would like to develop expertise. A listing of group task and group building and maintenance roles in discussion will help them develop a vocabulary to recognize the different roles (see Appendix D for a list of roles in discussion).
3. **Provide students with data on their individual metadiscourse use.** Students can see whether what they think they said in discussion matches the record of what they said. Because individuals bring their speech patterns into any discussion, an instructor can help students make a change by drawing those habits to their attention (see Table 1).
4. **Diagram the discussion flow.** Invite a student to sit outside the group, as the audience does at NCHC conference fishbowls, to diagram the discussion (Ronco, "Diagramming Discussions"). The participants can then discuss the diagram, identify problems, and take action to improve discussion. Figure 8 shows group members filtering much of their conversation through the leader, possibly without developing each other's ideas.
5. **Invite metadiscourse use to connect presentations.** Ask speakers to comment on the previous speaker's project before beginning their presentation. Once they have completed their presentation, ask them to introduce the next speaker. In the formal setting of presenting individual research, each presenter restates and contextualizes the previous speaker's new information for the group.

My hope for the study is to inform honors teaching practices. Since students' speech develops gradually as they feel socialized into the academic community, my mentoring techniques do not specify extensive explicit instruction. However, if academics want students to develop their oral discourse, instructors have to give them an opportunity to talk. Students may imagine that instructors do not welcome their ideas, as some conveyed in the following post-discussion exchange. On asking the 2014 group whether they were carrying over their leadership skills to other discussions, several students volunteered opinions:

- Well, generally, for my classes, it seems like, it's the professor asking a question and you raise your hand.
- People get shushed in our group. . . .
- I have the feeling it was more of a teacher-oriented discussion since the beginning, I felt like I'm always trying to contribute something, like my own idea, and then once I've contributed to the idea the professor is more like, "Eh, not really, this is kinda what it is. . . ." It wasn't something that they thought fit with their view.
- Yeah, I'm in the same class as him and I've personally been shut down in class before trying to talk. So, I don't speak in that class very often. . . .
- It's not like we've given up on discussions, we just know the boundaries in the class.
- They're just very small, controlled discussions.

The deliberate discussion leader ensures everyone is recognized. By using reflexive language to acknowledge and engage students, an instructor can model Elaborative Processing and metadiscourse while validating the ideas of her students.

## CONCLUSION

The structure of a speaker's language traces the structure of her thought. My effort to help students manage their discussions facilitated their ability to learn. New honors students were eager "to show a little respect" and "to come off the right way to somebody." Their social motives for using metadiscourse began the process of their academic socialization. Their use of metadiscourse in seminar stimulated collaborative inquiry. Metadiscourse accelerated listening, promoted understanding, increased organization, and intensified group



and individual identity. To the extent that metadiscourse use is a learning process, the study results support Clump's finding for instructors of "courses geared toward helping students succeed in college" that "*just teaching students about effective learning processes can influence their utilization of those effective processes*" (296). My study hopes to demonstrate that teaching students about metadiscourse encouraged their use of the rhetorical tool to express their Elaborative Processing.

The challenge for honors instructors lies in engaging students in defensible dialogue. Students can rise to doing more than speaking their piece or reciting what they had planned to say to earn class participation points. They can be present and open to each other's ideas. Seen as a tool by which to avoid killing and "plopping" other people's ideas, metadiscourse used in class discussion directs the speaker to identity and empathy, in short, to academic socialization (Ronco, "Stop Killing"). In her *New York Times* opinion piece "Stop Googling. Let's Talk," Turkle cites a longitudinal study that found a 40% decline in empathy among college students, with most of the decline taking place after 2000. Today's students choose the level of "attention" to bestow on the other. In a discussion class, they may choose to be simply present, or they may experience a mutual social presence (Biocca and Harms). In an expert discussion, metadiscourse helps speakers decenter their perception long enough to make a connection with others. Metadiscourse helps the speaker focus. It also encourages the speaker—rather than the teacher—to restate and contextualize ideas. Teachers of discussion-centered courses can invite students to sharpen their "Yes and" approach. They can help their students refine their metadiscourse.

As we adjust our curriculum to keep pace with our students, we also need to adjust our pedagogies to meet their needs beyond the honors seminar. According to one projection of honors in the year 2025, "Citizenship and leadership develop where students build and facilitate conditions for human flourishing, including practices of listening, turn-taking, and non-violent conflict resolution along with respect for difference" (Scott and Frana). Our increasingly team-based and interdisciplinary workplace will require sophisticated verbal skills from students. More importantly, students will have considered the meta-question "What is learning?" and see that it is an ongoing and far-ranging discussion. Possessing rhetorical tools such as metadiscourse to own a discussion, students gain independence, develop leadership, and enact cognitive responsibility. To prepare students for creative careers in a knowledge-based society, schools need to cultivate collaborative, inquiry-based practices.



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## APPENDIX A

### Skills Survey by 2016 Group

Instructions: This survey attempts to determine your feelings about discussion. In answering, please consider your overall experience of discussion held in a classroom setting.

#### Open-Ended Question on Speaking Experience

1. Do you have any experience in public speaking? (i.e., speech, debate, school play, 4H, FFA)
2. Have you taken a speech class in high school or college?
3. Are you more comfortable speaking in front of people you know or strangers?
4. Are there any aspects of class discussion about which you are nervous?

#### Questions on Comfort Level Speaking

Rating Scale: 1—not at all comfortable, 2—somewhat comfortable, 3—neutral, 4—fairly comfortable, 5—very comfortable

5. How comfortable are you speaking in a classroom setting?
6. How comfortable are you with speaking in settings other than a classroom? (i.e., conferences, job, meetings, etc.)

#### Questions on Using Interpersonal Cues in Classroom Discussion

Rating Scale: 1—not at all aware, 2—somewhat aware, 3—neutral, 4—fairly aware, 5—very aware

7. How aware are you of other people's use of interpersonal cues in classroom discussion (i.e., asking a question, thanking the speaker for something they shared, acknowledging that the speaker's point of view is different from yours, expressing empathy for the speaker's experience, building verbal bridges between speakers)?

Rating Scale: 1—not at all skilled, 2—somewhat skilled, 3—neutral, 4—fairly skilled, 5—very skilled

8. How skilled are you at using interpersonal cues in classroom discussion? (i.e., "I like how you used the word "sacrifice," "You stole my point," "What do you think?" "Going back to what Mary was saying," "I kind of

agree”—what these phrases have in common is each phrase recognizes other speakers by naming a speaker, referring to something they said, relating what they say to what someone else said, or asking a question, etc.)

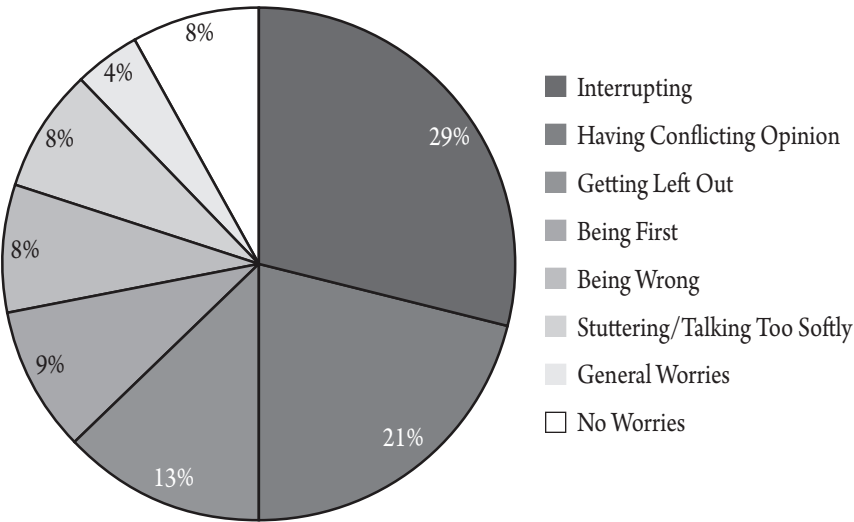
### **Questions on Effect of Using Interpersonal Cues in Classroom Discussion**

Rating Scale: 1—not at all, 2—somewhat, 3—neutral, 4—fairly, 5—very much

9. To what extent does a speaker's use of interpersonal cues make listening to the speaker and understanding where he/she is coming from easier?
10. To what extent does your own use of interpersonal cues help you feel like you're contributing to a shared undertaking?
11. To what extent does a speaker's use of interpersonal cues help you understand/empathize with/feel compassion for the speaker?
12. To what extent does the use of interpersonal cues in discussion by yourself or another speaker help you organize your thoughts?
13. To what extent does the use of interpersonal cues help create class synergy (the interaction of contributions that when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual contributions)?
14. To what extent does your or other speakers' use of interpersonal cues help you understand yourself better in relation to others?

APPENDIX B

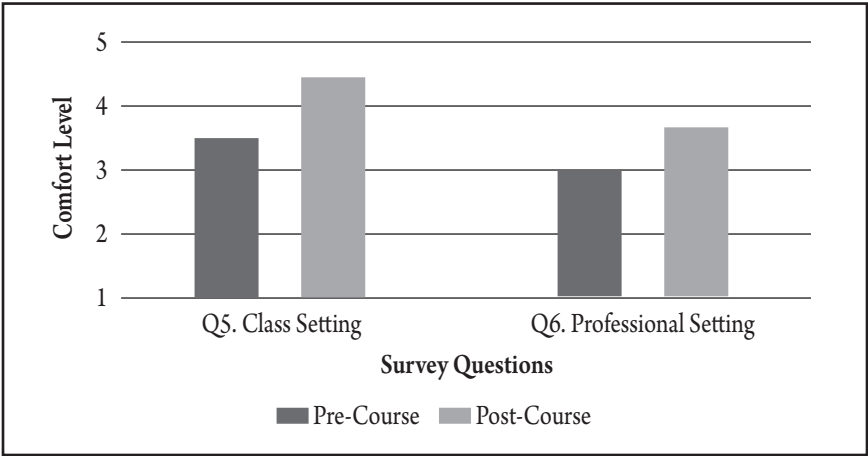
Pre-Course Discussion Concerns of 2016 Group





APPENDIX C

Comfort Level in Discussion of 2016 Group



## APPENDIX D

### Roles Survey by 2016 Group

Instructions: Please identify the roles at which you excel in discussion from the list below (adapted from Benne and Sheats).

**Clarifiers** clear up misunderstandings or confusion by explaining points or providing additional information.

**Compromisers** volunteer concessions of their own positions on controversial issues and suggest a middle ground when other members seem stuck in opposing positions. They help all members realize that they are contributing.

**Encouragers** offer warmth, praise, and recognition during discussions. They support quieter members, whom they gently encourage to join in.

**Energizers** motivate the members, often by communicating a sense of enthusiasm.

**Feeling expressers** share their own feelings or articulate those of the seminar, thereby enabling members to deal with emotions that might interfere with the ability to work together productively.

**Gatekeepers** assure that all team members have an opportunity to speak, sometimes by asking the more talkative members to be brief and by inviting quieter members for their contributions.

**Harmonizers** help team members explore differences of opinion without hurting one another's feelings. They detect and reduce friction by helping to focus on ideas rather than personalities.

**Information givers** furnish the facts needed, sometimes on their own initiative, sometimes in response to information seekers, through their own knowledge, and through research.

**Initiators** offer new ideas, propose new solutions, and restate old issues in novel ways. They provide creativity and direction.

**Information seekers** request clarification and additional information. They ensure that the seminar members understand all relevant factors.

**Opinion seekers** ask other members to express their judgments, values, and opinions. They also share their own views.

**Summarizers** consolidate the deliberations by stating concisely what has been said.

# Honors Students' Perceptions of Language Requirement as Part of a Global Literacy Competency

KATELYNN MALECHA AND ANNE DAHLMAN

Minnesota State University

Competency-based approaches to education are becoming increasingly common in higher education. One of the key principles of competency-based education is flexibility, which “allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning” (U.S. Department of Education). This adaptability enables students to gain knowledge and know-how that they can demonstrate outside of traditional classroom boundaries, focusing on acquiring real-life skills that involve “learning through student actions and performances that embody and reflect competence in using information, content, ideas, and tools” (Malan; Spady qtd. in Nodine 6).

Competency is gained and demonstrated through learning experiences, which consist of a carefully designed and scaffolded cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Kolb). According to Kolb, a basic premise of this kind of experiential learning is that learning is an active process where

learners renegotiate, learn, relearn, and unlearn previously acquired concepts through experience. Kolb emphasizes the importance of this critical consciousness that differentiates competency from skills, which he sees as mere abilities that we possess, absent from mental awareness or engagement during learning.

In some examples of competency-based approaches in collegiate honors education (see Wilson, for example), students may fulfill honors requirements through experiences outside of the traditional classroom. While the degree to which honors programs might award actual credits for experiences taking place outside of the classroom varies across programs, the value in learning gained through experiences and based on student needs is clearly expressed in key recommendations for honors programs by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) and as stated in the first characteristic of its guidelines, “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program.” The NCHC has a long tradition of encouraging real-life learning experiences that provide students with authentic ways to grow their knowledge and skills.

Corley and Zubizarreta chronicle the adoption of a competency-based approach at the Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) Honors Program, which emerged from a series of stakeholder conversations with students, faculty, alumni, business leaders, and political figures. This collaboration and feedback resulted in three competencies on which the program is built: leadership, undergraduate research, and global citizenship. Our current research continues exploration of the competency-based approach by presenting the findings of a study focusing on one of the three competencies at MNSU, namely the global citizenship competency, and its potential application to other programs with competency-based education or the inclusion of intercultural competency as a key component in their curriculum.

The university-wide MNSU Honors Program currently serves 184 students from all academic colleges on a campus of 11,000 undergraduate students. The program was redesigned in 2009, when it adopted its current competency-based program focusing on leadership, research, and global citizenship. The curriculum of the program consists of the following:

Coursework in Honors (each course having experiential learning as its core principle):

- a 1-credit introductory course (honors section of a First-Year Experience seminar or Introduction to Honors course);
- 3 credits of upper-level honors seminar (topics designed around the three competency areas)

- 3 credits of upper-level honors seminar, Service Learning, Practicum, or Independent Study
- a 1-credit senior portfolio class
- language courses as necessary to fulfill language requirement

Competency Development through Experiences:

- Engagement in learning experiences based on individually created learning plans
- Experiences consisting on average of two experiences per competency area per year
- Examples of experiences affording learning opportunities: service learning, research activity, coursework (general education, major, honors program), study abroad/away, engagement in student organizations, leadership experiences, activity in professional organizations in an area of study, work assignments, or residence life
- Demonstration of gained knowledge, skills, and understandings through an electronic portfolio (reviewed formally each year by a faculty committee)
- Formal defense of obtained competencies at the end of the senior portfolio class in front of a defense committee

The global citizenship competency, the focus of the current study, is defined on the website of the Minnesota State University, Mankato Honors Program as follows:

Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to lead and serve in a multicultural world through increased self-awareness of one's own culture and its relationship to others, deepened understanding of other cultural perspectives, attainment of second language proficiency, and demonstrated awareness of culture-language connections in communication.

To develop their global citizenship competency, students engage in a variety of cross-cultural experiences, whether through study abroad, study away, or service learning, and increase their awareness and understanding of other cultures and social realities through reflection and self-assessment. Also, all honors students learn a second language as part of their honors curriculum

requirements. Furthermore, international students are intentionally invited into the program as Visiting Scholars or as regular honors students if staying at the university for the entirety of their undergraduate studies; in fact, 23% of the honors students in the program are either ethnic minorities or international students. The key expectation of learning experiences in the area of global citizenship competency is direct engagement with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures, included in the Student Handbook as one of the the main values: “Honors students at Minnesota State University, Mankato value . . . [t]he understanding of cultural differences and similarities through study and direct engagement with people from various backgrounds and cultures” (Minnesota State University, Mankato, Honors Program).

The gains in global citizenship competency are evaluated through a portfolio assessment process that focuses on attainment of both competency and growth. Each student maintains an updated electronic portfolio that includes descriptions of relevant experiences, reflections, and evidence artifacts targeting the various components and levels on a competency rubric (Table 1). A faculty committee formally reviews all electronic portfolios each year based on this rubric. The global citizenship rubric was revised in 2015, adding more focus on language and culture connections and more complex traits related to cultural competency adapted from the “Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric” of the Association of American Colleges and Universities and from Wiggins and McTighe’s “Six Facets of Understanding.” The rubric is available on the Minnesota State University, Mankato Honors Program’s website.

In broad terms, Level 1 indicates a beginning level of competency (minimum expected level for first-year students) whereas Level 4 denotes expected performance for graduation from the honors program. However, within these expectations are numerous exceptions based on unique student circumstances and background experiences. For students to move to the next level, they need both increased experience and reflection.

What often makes developing global citizenship challenging for students is that no easy, pre-determined set of experiences fulfill the requirement. Global competency is measured by a person’s growing awareness of herself as a cultural being, increased knowledge of other cultures, and deepened understanding of language and culture connections. The journey of learning about global citizenship is highly individual and requires serious introspection, the kind of thorough mental and emotional investment that is required for growth in intercultural competency.

TABLE 1. THE GLOBAL COMPETENCY EVALUATION RUBRIC

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>Self-Awareness</b>			
Demonstrates emerging realization of oneself as a member of a culture.	Shows emerging awareness of the varied contexts and boundaries of one's own culture and its cultural rules and biases.	Recognizes new perspectives about own cultural rules and biases and compares and contrasts own culture with others and their cultures.	Perceives one's personal style, prejudices, projections, and habits of mind that both shape and impede our own understanding; shows awareness of what one does not understand and why understanding is so hard.
<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b>			
Asks simple or surface questions about other cultures. Demonstrates beginning understanding of other cultures based on brief encounters with others (e.g., culture nights).	Asks questions about other cultures that result in increased understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of an/other culture/s (e.g., history, values, politics, etc.) through increased, longer interactions with others (e.g., IELI tutoring).	Asks deeper questions about other cultures and seeks out answers to these questions. Begins to <i>initiate</i> and develop interactions with culturally different others.	Asks complex questions about other cultures, seeks out and articulates answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives. Continuously seeks out opportunities to interact with culturally different others. Suspends judgment in valuing her/his interactions with culturally different others.
<b>Communication</b>			
Has an emerging level of understanding of cultural differences in verbal and non-verbal communication.	Through practice with a second language, identifies some cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and the connection between language and culture.	Through increased practice with a second language, recognizes and participates in cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and draws connections between multiple experiences and issues related to language and culture.	Articulates a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and provides a thoughtful account of what learning a second language has taught one about culture, the world, and the complexity of relations between groups of people.

The rubric serves not only for faculty evaluation of students but also as a critical self-evaluation tool for students. The program curriculum, course learning outcomes, and course assignments are designed around specific competencies and levels within a rubric. The complete infusion of the learning outcomes outlined in the competency rubric into all aspects of the honors program has enabled the program to better monitor the complexity of the global citizenship competency.

One of the unique aspects of the program is the “Communication” component of the rubric, the focus of our current study. Language plays a key role in the global citizenship competency requirement, with all students in the program required to learn a second language. Students can demonstrate this competency in multiple ways: by taking classes, by personal study, by studying abroad, or by a combination thereof. English may count towards this goal if the student’s native language is not English. The language competency level that is required for the program is measured on a standardized national scale (determined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) as intermediate-low and intermediate-mid proficiency, which is equal to the level of four semesters of foreign language study in college.

The aim of the “Communication” component in the rubric is that students, through foreign language study, not only acquire a level of fluency in a second language but also experience and examine the complex, critical relationships between language and culture. The process of learning a second language gives students personal insight into deeper levels of culture because “language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives” (Kramsch 3). Individuals are accepted into a cultural community based on their ability to speak the language competently enough to qualify as a member (Ahearn). By experiencing firsthand the rules of interaction in a language community through language practice, honors students—most of them majority English-speakers in our context—stand to gain a deeper understanding of issues related to language and power.

In addition to socialization, language plays a significant role in a person’s cultural being as individuals “view their language as a symbol of their social identity” (Kramsch 3). By becoming minority language speakers through learning a foreign language, students gain insight into the “self” they see themselves to be and into the “person” whom others see them to be (Joseph 9). This insight is critical in understanding minority individuals in American society who regularly experience tension between internal and external perspectives of their identity, the external often plagued by prejudice and discrimination.



While the program stakeholders widely agree with the value of the language requirement in helping students grasp language-culture connections, we have also received feedback from students about the challenges that this requirement poses. We wanted to “assess the programmatic effectiveness of the current language requirement” and in particular “evaluate student perspectives of the role of the language requirement in obtaining global citizenship competency” as part of the honors program’s 2016–2019 strategic plan, so we have been committed to including a strong student voice in the process. This research study, serving as a needs assessment component of the strategic planning process, was thus completed collaboratively by the Honors Student Council president and the honors program director.

The focus of the study was to gauge students’ perspectives on the language requirement as part of the global citizenship competency, not as a stand-alone requirement, in order to help students see the critical connections of the language component to the broader competency. We wanted students to see the focus on culture, prejudice, membership, cultural interactions, perspectives, and non-verbal and verbal communication, not just the experience of “taking a foreign language class.” The research questions that guided data collection and analysis were thus:

- What are honors students’ perspectives of the Global Citizenship competency?
- What is students’ understanding of the purpose and requirements of the of the Global Citizenship competency?
- What do students find challenging about the Global Citizenship competency?
- What do students find beneficial about the Global Citizenship competency?

## DATA COLLECTION

Our data came from an anonymous survey sent to all sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the program. First-year students were excluded from the survey since, at the time it was administered, they had limited knowledge and experience of the program and competencies; they were just a few weeks into an introductory honors course preparing them for the program curriculum, competencies, and other requirements.

The survey was designed to solicit students' views on the value of the global citizenship competency requirement, their understanding of the purpose and requirements associated with the competency, and the program experiences designed to help students develop their competency. The survey included both multiple choice and open-ended items. The full survey questions are available in the Appendix.

Fifty out of 128 potential students from the honors program responded to the survey for a response rate of 39%: 15 sophomores (26% response rate), 17 juniors (41%), and 18 seniors (60%). We were somewhat satisfied with the response rates for the juniors and seniors, and although the response rate by sophomores was lower than desired, it echoed our challenges with participation by sophomores in other program activities, a problem for which we are actively exploring solutions.

On the survey, students were initially asked some background questions related to their experiences with all of the three competencies, such as what they felt was their strongest competency and where they felt they had experienced the most growth. Most students believed leadership was their strongest competency (60%). This result is not surprising since many of our students were student leaders in their high schools.

When asked in which competency students felt they had experienced most growth, the responses were almost equally divided into thirds, perhaps a result of the program's offering learning experiences across all competencies that promote student development and perhaps also because of students' openness to developing competencies that might not have been easiest for them. One of the main values of the program is that our students get out of their comfort zone and stretch themselves to grow, and students seem to have embraced this philosophy.

## RESULTS

In general, the results paint a picture of our students enjoying and understanding the purpose of the global citizenship competency but at the same time having questions about how to best reach the competency. The results help us determine how to better support our students in identifying experiences that help them grow as global citizens; how to better explain the intricate complementary connections between learning a second language and enhancing growth in cultural competency; and how students know that they are progressing in the cultural competency and advancing on the competency rubric.

## **Students' Understanding of the Purpose behind Global Citizenship**

Students clearly understand the purpose of the global citizenship competency (94%) and what is expected of them in relation to the competency requirement (92%). In addition, students overwhelmingly agree with the values associated with the global citizenship competency, namely that it is important to be able to work with people from various cultures and backgrounds in their future profession (100%).

This resounding agreement with the basic premise of the global competency rubric can be at least partially explained by the fact that the three competency areas, including global citizenship, are explicitly expressed as the guiding core pillars for the program, its curriculum, programming, advising, and communications. For example, students need to write an essay specifically related to the competencies as part of their application to the program. Also, all honors course proposals by faculty must be explicitly aligned with the three competencies, and these alignments must be visible on course syllabi. In addition, student advising (half-hour, one-on-one-sessions with each student in the fall) includes a specific section focused on planning for students' experiences to grow in a given competency area. Finally, we have created a student handbook, available on the program's website, that contains detailed information about the competencies. These support structures seem to have been helpful for students in understanding the intentions and expectations behind all the competencies, including the global citizenship competency.

## **Engagement in Experiences**

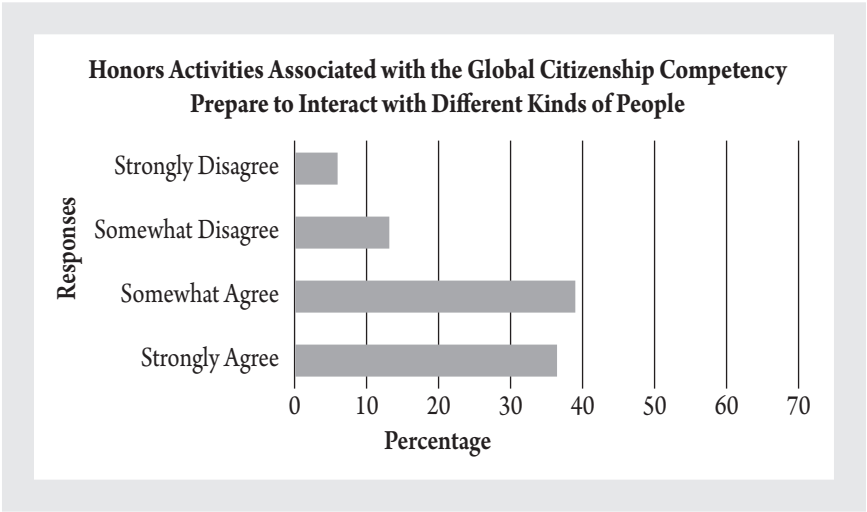
Given the experiential focus in the program, where students' main means of acquiring competencies is through learning activities, it is important to understand students' perspectives on how these experiences are or are not assisting them in growing in their global citizenship competency. As can be seen in Figure 1, students are somewhat, but not fully, in agreement that the honors activities associated with the global citizenship competency have helped them prepare to interact with different kinds of people: 74% either strongly or somewhat agreed. The honors activities referred to in the question include the many co-curricular offerings that the program either organizes or, if sponsored by other offices, advertises. Examples of activities include culture nights, culture-related lectures, diversity events, and programming by the international student center, diversity office, student organizations, or

individual programs and departments. Every Friday, a newsletter showcasing available experiences is sent to honors students organized under the three competency areas so that they can clearly identify which competency will be in practice. In addition, invitations are sent out via the program’s Facebook group. Given the program’s heavy focus on spreading the word about the many opportunities for engaging in cultural events, it is a bit surprising that students do not feel more confident that these experiences help them develop their cultural competency.

A deeper look at the survey results shows that 72% of students agree that they have engaged in several co-curricular activities focused on global citizenship (Figure 2), so a good portion of students have not engaged in several activities. This finding might partly explain the previous outcome that some students did not fully feel that the available activities helped them grow in their cultural competency; possibly, these students had not engaged in the cultural activities available to them. Most of the students in our program come from culturally homogeneous communities and might have a hard time identifying and/or attending learning experiences that could help them grow in their cultural competency. Such students could be apprehensive about engaging with communities different from their own or could be confused about cultural programming.

Confusion about ways to develop and demonstrate their global citizenship competency is also evident in students’ open-ended responses. For

**FIGURE 1. USEFULNESS OF HONORS PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP COMPETENCY**



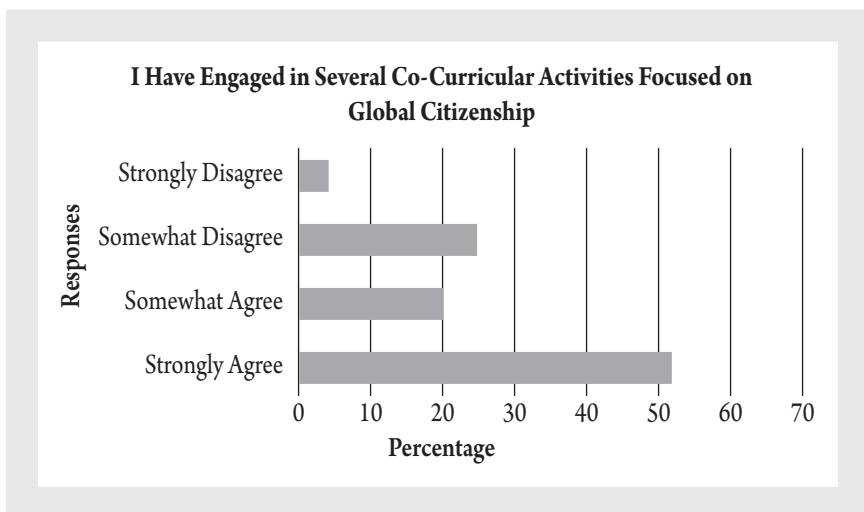
example, one student wanted to know ways of engaging culturally beyond study abroad: “I don’t know how to present an achieved skill in this competency besides studying another language or studying abroad. How do people get involved in cultures that are currently surrounding them?” Several other students mentioned study abroad as the preferred way of developing and demonstrating the global citizenship competency even though students are not required to study abroad and only a small portion of our students actually participate in a study abroad experience. One student wrote, for instance, “I love the competency aspect of the honors program. What I am unsure of is how to navigate the global citizenship component without being able to study abroad as most students do.”

The student responses indicate that the program needs to provide additional supports for students to identify experiences that are at their level developmentally and that can help them move forward on the competency rubric. In addition, students would benefit from additional mentoring on how to learn from their experiences and how to move away from a focus on meeting the requirement toward identifying lessons learned and growth gained.

### Better Communication about Available Experiences

The results of the survey demonstrate the need for our program to better communicate regarding the various experiences that exist to help students develop their global citizenship competency. In addition to our intensive

**FIGURE 2. ENGAGEMENT IN AVAILABLE ACTIVITIES BY STUDENTS**



advising, we intend to add suggestions for activities on the students' plan of study template and in conversations with the students to identify some particularly suitable ones. A list of potential activities could look something like this:

- Foreign language classes
- Coursework related to cultures
- Service learning/community engagement
- On-campus groups and activities (e.g., student organizations, events, work assignments, lectures, training opportunities, etc.)
- Study abroad/away
- Research activity related to global citizenship
- Inter-cultural interactions (formal and informal)

In addition, we have begun to create profiles of past students and the experiences they engaged in for global citizenship as models for current students. Table 2 illustrates the list of activities that a recent graduate from the honors program participated in to develop and demonstrate her global citizenship competency. We have created several of these profiles and intend to create more with individuals from various majors and backgrounds, and we have already received initial positive feedback on their usefulness. Students find real-life examples beneficial, especially from students in a similar area of study. We plan to use these new maps as a tool in our competency-based group advising as well.

## **Understanding the Role of Language as Part of Culture**

Given the uniqueness of the second language requirement in our program, we were keen to examine students' perspectives on the connections between language and culture. The data are encouraging: a great majority of students (84%) agree that knowing a second language helps them better understand other cultures (Figure 3), indicating that they see the philosophical connection between knowing a second language and being culturally more competent.

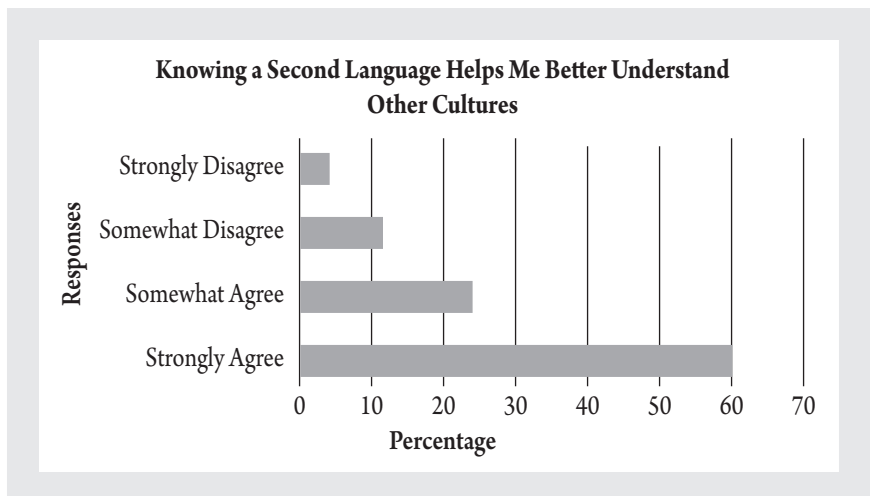
However, the open-ended responses reveal several points of potential confusion. While students understand the importance of knowing a second language in better understanding cultures, they are less certain about what these exact connections are and how to pursue activities that support these

connections. One student asked: “How does the second language competency come into play for global citizenship? I have reviewed the revised rubric and I believe that the understanding of another culture could also be achieved through events that make students interact with other cultures.” Another student wrote, “If you have met the language requirement and have projects loaded on the efolio, as well as having a few more events, have you completed global citizenship?” Students seem to be treating language proficiency and exposure to cultures as related but separate entities and requirements. We want students to learn about cultures in multiple ways beyond integrating language into study of culture, but we also want them to understand the critical connections between language and culture that one can only experience through learning a second language firsthand.

**TABLE 2. SAMPLE STUDENT PROFILE**

<b>Graduate Example: Culminating Experiences for Global Citizenship Competency</b>
<b>Student's Major: Anthropology</b>
1. Second Language: French (French 101, 102, 201, 202)
2. Research project in French 202 on Mont St. Michel
3. Honors 401: Study Away to Mississippi
4. Research project on the Tiwi in the course “People and Cultures of the World”
5. Research paper on Human Osteology through a course in Anthropology
6. Indigenous Language Project

**FIGURE 3. ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN UNDERSTANDING CULTURE**



Often honors students focus on meeting requirements, checking off boxes, and completing a list of expectations (cf. Clauss). Developing global citizenship competency can be challenging for students because it involves increased awareness of issues related to cultures, one's intercultural interactions, and one's development as a cultural being, none of which can be achieved by a mere completion of activities. The survey results indicate that the program needs to better bridge the gap between completing activity requirements and attaining meaningful learning from them so that students know when they have completed the requirements for the competency. Once students have gained experiences, have reflected on them using the descriptors on the global citizenship rubric, and have identified evidence for achieving certain levels in the rubric along with annual feedback from a faculty committee reviewing the student portfolios, they will gain a sense of where they are in their development. The program needs to enhance its support for students at this deep level of reflection and learning.

### **Need for Additional Supports for Reflection**

From a programmatic point of view, the data indicate a need for additional scaffolding to increase reflection on the connections between language and culture. While students learn a great deal about language and culture through language classes, honors seminars, experiential activities, and electronic portfolios, their learning about language and culture seems to be more parallel than integrated.

However, students' comments might also reveal a developmental issue in that the complex connections between language and culture are mostly assessed at students' final portfolio evaluations when they are seniors. What might be beneficial is better communication early on about what each of the four levels on the rubric looks like in practice so that students feel that they are on the right track. Students have indicated the need for this kind of communication in their comments. One student asked, "How will I know my competence is changing?" Another student had a great suggestion for what the program could do to support students with their global citizenship competency: "Give more examples and options either in the rubric or through emails of ways to improve the competency and specifically which level that event or example correlates with."

Students should feel in control of their own learning process and, with tools for experiences and reflection, be able to determine their current skills and areas needing work. While we do provide such guidance, we need to give



more examples of experiences and reflections that help students observe their learning and movement on the competency rubric in tangible ways so that they do not feel they have failed to master a level that is not even expected of them. The Honors Student Council is currently creating sample rubrics that include the ways current and past students have achieved certain levels.

## **Concerns about Additional Cost**

Because many students choose to complete their second language requirement by taking foreign language courses at the university instead of study abroad or individual study, for example, the cost of courses in time and money can be a burden. As one student suggested in response to a question about what the program could do to support developing global citizenship competency, “Financially support the pursuit of obtaining the language portion of the global citizenship competency.” While we recognize the financial concern for some students, we take pride in the fact that our institution is one of the most financially accessible in the Minnesota State university system, and students’ tuitions are banded between twelve and eighteen credits so that they pay the same tuition regardless of the number of credits they register for within this range. The perception of additional cost because of the language requirement does discourage some students from considering the program, but we consider the second language learning experience an integral part of our program and thus a worthwhile investment for a scholar.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of the current study show that the honors students enjoy and understand the purpose behind the global citizenship competency. The students may feel frustrated at times about the foreign language competency requirement because it is a demanding goal, but we encourage our students to challenge themselves inside and outside the classroom and reflect on the growth resulting from their new experiences. Scaffolding plays a critical role in managing students’ frustration at their level of proximal development, and we provide it through plans of study, examples of what other students have done, peer mentoring, and one-on-one and group advising. Planning appropriate goals and activities to fulfil competency requirements is a critical first step to assure a developmentally appropriate course of action as each student has different needs and paths for learning. Competency-based instruction, with its focus on flexibility, provides a particularly suitable way for students

to make their honors program experience truly theirs, gaining ownership and confidence in their part of learning. No two students follow the same route, but all graduates of the honors program capitalize on their strengths while extending their experiences and competencies in other areas.

The results also indicate that engaging in activities is not enough to develop competency as true learning results from critical consciousness (Kolb) associated with activities and gained through reflection. An articulated and well-explained competency rubric is helpful in enabling students to self-assess their current levels and to determine their own paths for reaching the next level in the competency rubric, using the descriptors as a guiding tool. These rubrics should be accompanied with carefully designed reflective prompts to support students' processing of their learning before, during, and after learning experiences.

In addition, students—especially from culturally homogeneous communities—might need special encouragement to push themselves into new experiences. Programs can help by purchasing cultural event tickets and encouraging attendance at events as a group to support students who might not otherwise attend. Also, even small financial awards, such as \$300 competency grants in our program, can encourage students to take a leap and attend professional events that they might not have considered affordable before. Program staff can also be intentional in inviting students to participate or to serve in leadership roles when they notice potential in students who might be shy about throwing themselves into uncharted territory. Many honors students resist taking risks because sticking to their plans and playing it safe have often led to academic success. However, success in the real world, with increasing diversity in all sectors of society, requires a multicultural learning stance and a willingness to learn in unfamiliar contexts.

One of the most significant takeaways from this study has been the process of conducting the study. The survey was created by students for students and was administered by the president of the Honors Student Council. The study enabled students, the honors program staff, and the Honors Program Council to engage in conversations about the global citizenship competency, its strengths and weaknesses. The president of the Honors Student Council gave a presentation about the survey results in one of the council's monthly meetings, generating the kind of discussion that not only results in new thinking and planning but also serves to strengthen the honors community on campus.

Although the global citizenship competency may be challenging, 100% of students in the current study agree on the importance of being able to work with people from various cultures and backgrounds in their future profession. The data also show that students appreciate the competency-based approach focusing on learning experiences and helping students prepare for the real world after college. Instead of a long list of honors courses, students enter graduate school or the workforce with not only an electronic portfolio filled with artifacts but also with a variety of experiences that they might not have known about before or might not have had the courage to engage in without the encouragement and scaffolding of a competency-focused experiential learning program. The artifacts and experiences, coupled with intentional and scaffolded reflection, prepare students to talk about their gained knowledge and skills and to articulate their special strengths to various stakeholders with a strong voice, demonstrating mastery of the competencies.

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**APPENDIX****Survey Questions**

1. Based on credits, I am currently a . . .
  - a. Freshman
  - b. Sophomore
  - c. Junior
  - d. Senior
2. Which competency area do you consider your strongest area (most experiences, most confident about)?
  - a. Leadership
  - b. Research
  - c. Global Citizenship
3. Which competency area have you experienced the most growth in during college (development, increased skills and knowledge)?
  - a. Leadership
  - b. Research
  - c. Global Citizenship
4. I understand the purpose behind the Global Citizenship competency.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Somewhat agree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Strongly disagree
5. I understand what is expected of me for meeting the Global Citizenship requirement.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Somewhat agree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Strongly disagree
6. I think that the Global Citizenship rubric is helpful in self-assessing development across time.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Somewhat agree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Strongly disagree

7. I have engaged in several co-curricular activities focused on Global Citizenship.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Somewhat agree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Strongly disagree
8. Honors activities associated with the Global Citizenship competency have helped me prepare to interact with different kinds of people.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Somewhat agree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Strongly disagree
9. Knowing a second language helps me better understand other cultures.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Somewhat agree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Strongly disagree
10. It is important to be able to work with people from various cultures and backgrounds in my future profession.
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Somewhat agree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Strongly disagree
11. What questions do you have about the Global Citizenship competency?
12. To help me improve my Global Citizenship skills, the Honors Program could . . .
13. Other feedback/comments:

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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***Fundraising for Honor\$: A Handbook*** by Larry R. Andrews (2009, 160pp). Offers information and advice on raising money for honors, beginning with easy first steps and progressing to more sophisticated and ambitious fundraising activities.

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***A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges*** by Theresa James (2006, 136pp). A useful handbook for two-year schools contemplating beginning or redesigning their honors program and for four-year schools doing likewise or wanting to increase awareness about two-year programs and articulation agreements. Contains extensive appendices about honors contracts and a comprehensive bibliography on honors education.

***The Honors College Phenomenon*** edited by Peter C. Sederberg (2008, 172pp). This monograph examines the growth of honors colleges since 1990: historical and descriptive characterizations of the trend, alternative models that include determining whether becoming a college is appropriate, and stories of creation and recreation. Leaders whose institutions are contemplating or taking this step as well as those directing established colleges should find these essays valuable.

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***Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges*** by Samuel Schuman (Third Edition, 2011, 80pp). Practical and comprehensive advice on creating and managing honors programs with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 4,000 students.

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***Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning*** edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (Second Edition, 2010, 128pp). Updated theory, information, and advice on experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 35 years, including Honors Semesters and City as Text™, along with suggested adaptations to multiple educational contexts.

***Preparing Tomorrow's Global Leaders: Honors International Education*** edited by Mary Kay Mulvaney and Kim Klein (2013, 400pp). A valuable resource for initiating or expanding honors study abroad programs, these essays examine theoretical issues, curricular and faculty development, assessment, funding, and security. The monograph also provides models of successful programs that incorporate high-impact educational practices, including City as Text™ pedagogy, service learning, and undergraduate research.

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***Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education*** edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to *Place as Text*, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

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***Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC)*** is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education.

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